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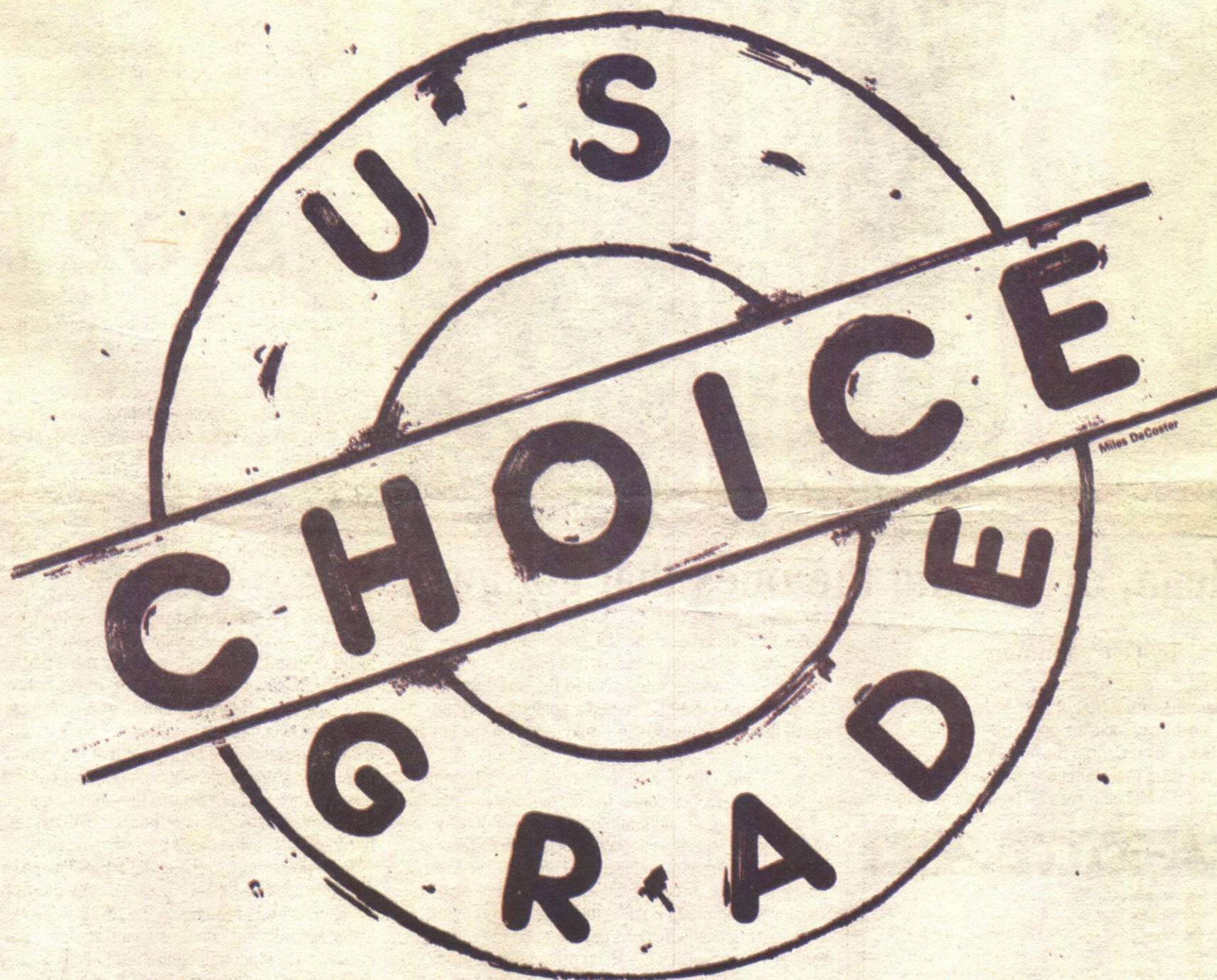
# IN THESE TIMES

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## EDUCATION



Bush flunks school test p.8

Good choice in the public schools p.9





Medellin drug cartel kingpin Pablo Escobar, President Bush and Panamanian Gen. Manuel Noriega: oh, what a tangled web.

## Noriega, drugs and the ones that got away

By Garry Emmons

Defense lawyers in the trial of Gen. Manuel Noriega could have a field day focusing on a still-unexplained 1984 episode in which George Bush apparently called time out in the drug war and chose not to move against the kingpins of the Medellín cartel. The incident demon-

strates the hypocrisy of the U.S. government's case against Noriega: in effect, the United States is prosecuting Noriega for providing safe haven to the cartel when the U.S. government itself passed up a golden opportunity to smash the cartel's leadership while it was on the lam in Panama.

In 1984, when then-Vice President Bush was head of the National Narcotics Border Interdiction System (NNBIS), U.S. and Panamanian authorities over a period of many weeks ignored repeated chances to detain Pablo Escobar and other Colombian cartel leaders. Forced to flee Colombia in May 1984 after ordering the assassination of Justice Minister Rodrigo Lara Bonilla, the drug lords sought sanctuary in Panama under the protection of Gen. Noriega. Noriega exacted a steep price for that protection—some \$4.6 million, according to prosecutors at the trial underway in Miami. At the time, Noriega was also on the payroll of the Central Intelligence Agency. The U.S. government itself now confirms that it has paid the Panamanian leader hundreds of thousands of dollars.

**The big ones who got away:** This failure of U.S. and Panamanian officials to move against cartel members while they were unusually vulnerable—on foreign soil and away from their Colombian strongholds—continues to raise troubling questions about the U.S. drug effort at the highest levels, both then and now.

The facts are well-established: Medellín bosses Pablo Escobar, Jorge Luis Ochoa and Jose Gonzalo Rodriguez Gacha hastily departed Colombia in the wake of a national outcry over the April 1984 machine-gun execution of Lara Bonilla, who had courageously initiated his country's first serious crackdown on the drug lords. Immediately after the murder, the first by the cartel of a major Colombian official, an outraged Colombian government launched dozens of raids against the cartel and arrested more than

100 people as part of a nationwide manhunt.

The cartel's entry into neighboring Panama could scarcely have gone unnoticed by Panamanian and U.S. intelligence. For one thing, the cartel's Panama entourage was hard to miss—its contingent of bodyguards alone consisted of nearly 100 heavily armed men. Furthermore, U.S.-paid Noriega was the most powerful man in the country. And tiny Panama, in addition to hosting CIA and State Department personnel, is the home of several major U.S. facilities: a National Security Agency listening post, the Howard Air Force base, the headquarters of the U.S. Southern Command and a Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) station. Indeed, a highly placed DEA informant named Barry Seal, who worked as a pilot for the cartel, later told a presidential commission that he was summoned to Panama by Ochoa during the cartel's May residence there.

Even if the cartel's immediate entry into Panama somehow escaped the notice of the U.S. and the Panamanians, the drug barons' presence there could not have remained secret for long, considering the lifestyle they maintained and the stature of the guests they entertained. On May 6, only days after arriving in the country, the cartel held a meeting with Alfonso Lopez Michelsen, a former president of Colombia. On May 26, they met with Colombia's Attor-

## INSIDE STORY

ney General Carlos Jimenez Gomez at the Cesar Park Marriott, the finest hotel in Panama City and a place known as "the DEA hotel" because of its popularity with agency personnel.

The United States' failure to bring pressure on Panama and U.S.-paid Noriega at least to detain the cartel for questioning about the murder of Lara Bonilla—a cabinet-level official of an allied government—is disturbing and inexplicable. It was at the Panama meetings with Lopez Michelsen and Jimenez Gomez that cartel members tried to strike a deal that would allow them to return to Colombia. These discussions, however, came to nothing. Eventually, Spanish police arrested Ochoa in Madrid in November 1984.

**Framing the Sandinistas:** Although the U.S. went through the motions of trying to extradite Ochoa from Spain, a Spanish court subsequently ruled that agents of the U.S. government had attempted to get Ochoa to implicate Nicaragua's leftist Sandinista government as drug-trafficking accomplices in return for not extraditing him to the United States. The court said that U.S. efforts to extradite Ochoa were "immersed in a political context." As a result, Ochoa was not sent to the United States but back to Colombia, where he later jumped bail and returned to his criminal activities.

Some postscripts to the cartel's 1984 Panama visit:

- From 1982 to 1985—a period during most of which George Bush was heading up the NNBIS—the Medellín cartel, according to congressional testimony, was funneling some \$10 million in contra aid to Felix Rodriguez, a close associate of Vice President Bush's national security adviser, Donald Gregg.

- DEA officials have charged that in June 1984, the National Security Council's Lt. Col. Oliver North blew informant Barry Seal's cover because a skeptical DEA wouldn't go along with North's insistence that the Sandinistas be portrayed as dangerous drug traffickers. A Colombian hit team murdered Seal two years later in New Orleans.

Thus in the spring of 1984, by their action and inaction, Bush and other members of the Reagan administration allowed the Medellín cartel to slip out of a very tight spot. Noriega's lawyers may frame the incident in harsher terms. President Bush, the man in charge of the U.S. anti-drug effort at the time, needs to explain why the cartel, at the mercy of U.S. hireling Noriega, was allowed to get away with murder. Drug-war-weary Americans and Colombians may get some answers during the Noriega trial. □

**Garry Emmons**, a Boston-based authority on Colombia, monitors events in that nation for several human-rights groups.

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By Larry Cohler

WASHINGTON

**P**RESIDENT BUSH'S CALL LAST WEEK FOR A delay in granting Israel a \$10 billion loan guarantee sets the stage for a Capitol Hill spectacle not seen in nearly a decade.

It was in 1981 that Israel and the pro-Israel lobby declared war on the Reagan administration's sale of advanced AWACs aircraft to Saudi Arabia. Not since then have the two sides gone to Congress to slug out such an important dispute.

Whether such a battle will occur again hangs in the balance as each side maneuvers for a compromise that would allow it to declare victory. From Bush's perspective, the very credibility of his vision for a "New World Order" in the Middle East is on the line. At stake for Israel is its ability to continue building settlements in the occupied West Bank and Gaza without paying a price in U.S. aid.

On Capitol Hill, the outcome will either strongly reinforce or deeply undermine the pro-Israel lobby's reputation as a tower of unassailable clout and influence.

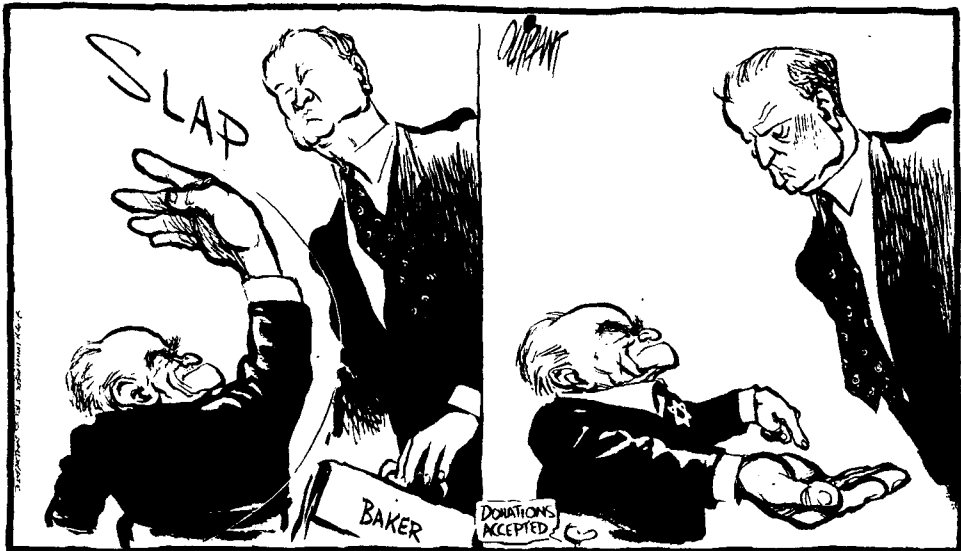
**Round one:** Ironically, the 1981 AWACs battle forged that reputation, though it was a battle the lobby lost. At the time, what was at stake was the administration's strategic vision of a Middle East of massively armed dictator-surrogates. So were billions of dollars in U.S. arms sales.

These were vouchsafed only after the White House narrowly won a vicious struggle to sustain its veto in Congress. But the surprising fierceness and near-success of the pro-Israel lobby in gaining a two-thirds majority of Congress actually catapulted it into a position of unprecedented influence. The Reagan administration never again challenged it head-on in Congress. Indeed, pro-Israel lobbyists were brought into the inner sanctum of the national security apparatus for respectful consultation. A decade later, the 1981 loser-turned-long-term-winner, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) confronts a new conflict, one in which only victory will suffice.

This time, the Bush administration is determined to maintain some lever of pressure on Israel to freeze its settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. The White House also wants to pressure Israel into attending a peace conference based on territorial compromise. In Bush's view, Israel will have little incentive to do either without the much-needed loan guarantee hanging over it as carrot or stick.

With Secretary of State James Baker still striving to lock in all the parties for an unprecedented Middle East peace conference, Bush was in no mood to remove this threat beforehand. Israeli officials warned that Bush's ploy might actually move them to back out of their conditional agreement to attend the conference—an agreement in any case subject to Israel's demand to approve the Palestinian delegation's makeup. But Bush was clearly gambling that Israel's ultimate reaction would be chastened by its desperate need for the loan guarantee to absorb an expected flood of 1 million Soviet Jewish immigrants in the next few years.

Many American peace and minority groups, key components of the lobby's strong showing on the AWACs, are on the sidelines or opposed to Israel's stand this time. But on Capitol Hill, liberal members of Congress have shown little appetite for taking on AIPAC and siding actively with a Re-



## Battle lines drawn between U.S. government and AIPAC

publican president—even if some were disturbed by the implications of pumping so much aid into Israel as it pursued its most intensive settlement effort ever in the Occupied Territories.

At the same time, few lawmakers have jumped at AIPAC's call to confront the president—not with Bush warning that a congressional move on the loan guarantee would "risk losing ... the best chance to promote Arab/Israeli peace since the Camp David Accords."

With the 1992 elections quickly approaching, even some regularly pro-Israel Democrats seemed disinclined to risk taking the blame for failed peace efforts. Despite urgent entreaties from both sides, congressional Democratic leaders took no official position on the issue. Individual members were left to fend for themselves.

**The Dems' dilemma:** The Democrats, in fact, face an unpalatable choice that could complicate their party's campaign strategy for 1992 no matter what they do. On the one hand, many are genuinely sympathetic to the call to aid Soviet Jewry. And they are certainly eager to qualify for pro-Israel PAC money for the 1992 elections—especially after AIPAC was widely perceived as spurning Dukakis for Bush in 1988. But Democratic Party strategy for the 1992 elections calls for concerted attacks on Bush for ignoring desperate domestic needs for the sake of grandiose and costly international campaigns.

The proposed loan guarantee—essentially a U.S. cosigning of loans Israel will seek from commercial banks—is not itself a grant or a loan. It will merely enable Israel to get the private loans on vastly more favorable terms. But the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is reportedly ready to require Congress to set aside some \$800 million of U.S. funds in case of an Israeli default—all of which must be scored against the federal deficit.

Under congressional budget rules, the \$800 million would have to be taken from some other State Department or foreign aid programs. Congress could vote to lower the OMB's figure. But Democrats are currently rallying to pounce on Bush's readiness to

beg, borrow or steal for international crusades.

In addition, some Democrats are still displeased with AIPAC, which they believe unjustly spurned their party in 1988. The lonely role of Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT) is instructive in this respect. Formerly a reliable vote for AIPAC, Leahy brusquely dismissed the lobby in a recent conversation as nothing more than "a Republican organization."

In recent weeks, however, lawmakers and lobbyists have been searching for a compromise. In exchange for deferring the issue until January, AIPAC needed a presidential promise now of unconditional support for the loan guarantee then (along with some additional "bridge" aid to cover Israel's needs in the meantime). This, pro-Israel lobbyists felt, was the minimum necessary to portray any compromise as a victory.

But a three-page letter on the issue that Bush sent to congressional leaders on September 10 offered no such assurance. And

### The White House is determined to keep pressure on Israel to freeze its settlements in the Occupied Territories.

in comments to reporters the next day, Bush voiced a continued willingness to fight it to the end.

**The great build-up:** Israel's own actions have not helped its cause in Washington. In February, Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir personally assured Bush that no plans existed to step up settlement activity. Shortly afterward, Israeli Housing Minister Ariel Sharon embarked on the greatest buildup of the settlements since Shamir came to office. Some 22,000 housing units have been built since mid-1990, according to the latest disclosures. Construction already begun will more than double the population of about 100,000 Jews now living in the territories.

While he initially tried to keep these figures veiled, Sharon or his supporters made a point of greeting every Baker visit to Israel on behalf of the peace process by conspicuously inaugurating a new settlement. Congress, which abhors Sharon, was no less upset than Baker. And, if only on purely pragmatic grounds, so were pro-Israel advocates.

"We're behind you, and we're going to do our jobs. But you're putting us in an impossible situation," one American Jewish activist pleaded bitterly to a prominent Israeli official at an off-the-record forum in Israel last July. "I would never say this in Washington," he added. The official curtly told him it was Israel's job to decide on its policies and his to support them.

Shamir's vow on September 8 to continue building settlements blew the last shred of cover off supporters of Israel who continued to claim there was no justification in linking "humanitarian" aid to needy Soviet immigrants to a political controversy over the Occupied Territories. Shamir himself drew the linkage. Calling for increased settlement in all areas, including the West Bank and Gaza, Shamir declared, "The main thing is that the population of Israel, which is increasing, must also increase in these parts of the Land of Israel." In fact, no serious demographers deny the existence of such a linkage as long as Israel maintains its current settlement policies.

While Israeli officials have pledged not to spend U.S. aid in the Occupied Territories, Israel's West Bank housing policies have been made possible by money freed by such aid.

And while Israel has promised not to actively "direct" Soviet and Ethiopian immigrants to the West Bank, a small but significant number end up there. Much more importantly, their massive influx has created a terrible housing crunch in the urban central region of the country to which most of the immigrants flock. For veteran Israelis squeezed out of this market by Soviet immigrants, the nearby West Bank offers cheap long-term leasing of government land, generous government-funded mortgage subsidies and special tax breaks—all offered by the government to encourage West Bank settlement.

Pro-Israel activists fear Bush's awareness of this is behind his refusal—so far—to promise unconditional support for the loan guarantee, even if they agree to his four-month deferral. Though clearly disgusted with the PLO after it sided with Saddam Hussein in the Persian Gulf War, Bush still sees "land-for-peace" as a fundamental prerequisite to any successful peace conference. And with Saddam still in power and Kuwait an environmental ruin sinking back into feudal despotism, he sees a successful peace conference as the one major achievement of his New World Order in the region where it all started.

For Bush, whose vehement opposition to Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories long predates his presidency, Shamir's defiance has assumed a personal dimension. After frustrating and disappointing efforts to stem Israeli settlement activity by more indirect means, Bush may be determined to force him to choose between his commitment to settlements and to Soviet Jews.

Larry Cohler is senior writer for *Washington Jewish Week*.



By Joel Bleifuss

## Scandal Gates

As CIA Director-designate Robert Gates pleads ignorance to knowledge of CIA misdeeds before the Senate Intelligence Committee this week, the lawmakers might do well to remember his sworn testimony of March 6, 1986. At the time, CIA Director William Casey had nominated Gates for the number-two position at the agency. In an effort to impress the senators considering his nomination, Gates said: "[Casey] and I have consulted extensively, even in my present position [as deputy director for intelligence] in all areas of intelligence policy including not just analysis and estimates but also organization, budgeting and covert action. I will now have a formal role in all of these areas."

If Gates really had "a formal role in all of these areas"—which appears likely—he certainly knows more than he has let on. And someone should ask Gates what he knows about the Wackenhut Corporation of Coral Gables, Fla.

As the Wackenhut letterhead puts it, the company provides "security systems and services throughout the world." As Wackenhut's Director of Special Investigations Service Wayne Black told the *Washington Times*' Deanna Hoagin earlier this year: "We are similar to a private FBI." The company's board of directors reads like a who's who of the intelligence community. In 1984, for example, former Deputy CIA Director Bobby Inman, currently one of Gates' main boosters in Washington, was a director of the company. And among those on the 1983 board were two former FBI special agents, one retired Air Force general, one former commander in chief of the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD), one former director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, former CIA Director William Rabor, Nixon-appointed FBI Director Clarence Kelly and former CIA Deputy Director Frank Carlucci (who would later become Ronald Reagan's national security adviser). Further, the 1983 board included Robert Chasen, a former FBI special agent who was Carter's commissioner of customs until 1980, when he became a vice president of Wackenhut. Also in 1980, soon-to-be CIA chief William Casey served as Wackenhut's outside legal counsel—the same year he managed the Reagan-Bush election campaign.

**On the reservation:** It was in 1980 that Wackenhut began working closely with Southern California's Cabazon Indians and their tribal administrator John Philip Nichols. The *San Francisco Chronicle*'s Jonathan Littman reported this month that Nichols, a white American who spent years in South America, has boasted to friends about working on the attempted assassination of Fidel Castro and the successful assassination of Salvador Allende.

The Cabazons hired Nichols as their administrator in 1978. Littman reports that thanks to Nichols' connections and grantsmanship, "federal and state agencies are helping to finance nearly \$250 million worth of projects on the 1,700-acre reservation" belonging to the 30-member Cabazon tribe. According to Littman, these projects include a HUD and mafia-financed casino, a 1,800-unit housing complex and a \$150 million waste incinerator/power plant that was built with tax-exempt state bonds.

But most intriguing is the Wackenhut/Cabazon joint venture, which began in 1980 when the tribe was asked to design a security system for Crown Prince Fahd's palace in Tiaf, Saudi Arabia. This was followed by Wackenhut/Cabazon joint venture proposals to develop biological weapons for the Pentagon and assemble night-vision goggles for the Guatemalan and Jordanian governments.

Why was a security firm so interested in working with a small tribe of native Americans? One good reason can be found in a May 26, 1981, inter-office memo from Wackenhut executive Robert Frye to the above-mentioned Robert Chasen. Frye described an 11-day business trip with Nichols "to explore the apparent potential for the Cabazon-Wackenhut joint venture." Frye wrote that the reservation has "several key ingredients necessary" for a weapons plant, including "lack of opposition by adjacent governing bodies and 'irate citizens' over the siting of such a facility."

John Philip Nichols is no longer officially running the reservation. According to Littman, son Mark Nichols is the tribal administrator while the elder Nichols serves as a "mental-health counselor to Cabazon reservation employees." John Philip Nichols lost his job because federal law prohibits convicted felons from running casinos.

In January 1985, Nichols was sentenced to four years in prison for capital solicitation of murder. He served 19 months. No one



Joel Bleifuss

## Jonathan Goldman: student SEACer

By Jim McNeill

In a generation dominated by ambitious business majors, Jonathan Goldman seems out of step. At 25, Goldman is returning to the University of Chicago where he has been an occasional student since 1984. "At the moment," he says, political science is his major.

Goldman's timely passage through school is currently jeopardized by his involvement with the Student Environmental Action Coalition (SEAC). Goldman is a key Chicago-area organizer for SEAC (pronounced seek), perhaps the most promising student movement to emerge in the U.S. since Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) forged a "new left" at Port Huron in the early '60s.

Ironically, Goldman is discussing SEAC in one of those ubiquitous urban cafes that's preserved the posture, but discarded the politics of that bygone era. As his interviewer devours a falafel, Goldman, who's already eaten, politely answers the inevitable question about SEAC and SDS.

Goldman, face framed by round-rimmed glasses and long hair pulled back in a ponytail, laughs. "I hate comparisons to the '60s." Pausing, Goldman continues, "If we have to be compared with the '60s, I think SEAC is much closer to the civil rights movement than we are to SDS. I think the civil rights movement of the '60s is the real model for the environmental fight of the '90s."

SEAC, says Goldman, will play a crucial role in that fight. Founded three years ago, SEAC already has affiliates on more than 1,200 campuses throughout the U.S. and Canada. Goldman, not prone to exaggeration, believes SEAC "can re-define the politics of my generation." If you'd attended Catalyst, SEAC's 1990 national conference, you just might believe him.

Catalyst organizers optimistically expected 3,000 students to attend the early October gathering at the University of Illinois' Champaign-Urbana campus. More than 7,000 showed up. And it was clear when they'd arrived that they'd left the bipartisan politics of the '80s behind.

Within Catalyst's first 15 minutes, Elizabeth Ising, a SEAC coordinator from James Madison University, urged the assembly to act as "revolutionary" agents

for "fundamental change." The impeccably all-American Ising, invoking Che Guevara, reminded students, "The true revolutionary is guided by feelings of love." The conferees cheered wildly.

Somehow, Catalyst organizers, Goldman among them, lured Jesse Jackson, Ralph Nader, Cesar Chavez, Winona LaDuke and Robert Redford to Champaign-Urbana. Goldman says, "A lot of people came to Catalyst thinking it was a hip road-trip. But I think a lot of them went home feeling they'd been a part of something special."

Part of SEAC's uniqueness, Goldman argues, is that it's a youth movement that is actually aware of history. One article in a recent SEAC newsletter warned readers "to avoid idolizing our past (as tends to happen in *Rolling Stone*) without ignoring it (an SDS mistake)." While SEAC literature refers frequently—and passionately—to tales of environmental and labor history, the specter of the '60s student movement is perhaps the most pervasive historical influence. That history has a powerful pull on Goldman as well.

**Growing up aware:** Like many SEAC members, Goldman grew up hearing stories about the '60s from his father, a Jewish chaplain at Columbia University during the 1968 student protests.

When students staged a sit-in that spring, Goldman's father joined a group of faculty who had gathered in front of campus buildings to prevent a violent confrontation between police and students. Despite the faculty presence, the administration ordered police to forcibly remove the students. After being trampled by police, Goldman's father was then booted by Columbia.

After the University dismissed him, Goldman's father began hosting a New York radio show—WBAI's "Up Against the Wailing Wall." The show featured freewheeling political commentary and analysis, most of which was lost on the young Goldman, who often accompanied his father to the studio. He says, "I just remember not being able to run around and make noise 'cause Dad was on the air."

Nevertheless, he says he "grew up politically aware." While attending New York's Stuyvesant High School, Goldman worked for nuclear disarmament. And during his first stint at the University of



Chicago he worked on the South African divestment campaign. Those experiences provided Goldman with "organizing skills and political background." But he says, "It was SEAC that made me an activist."

Goldman first got involved with SEAC in August 1990, when a roommate, then in Champaign-Urbana preparing for Catalyst, asked if he would organize for Catalyst in Chicago. Goldman agreed. He has been working with SEAC ever since.

Over the past year, Goldman has spoken to high school environmentalists on the steps of the Michigan state Capitol. He has talked to—and wrested funds from—philanthropic groups. And he coordinated a task force on the environment for the United States Student Association's national congress in Milwaukee.

Currently, Goldman is preparing a workshop for this year's SEAC conference, Common Ground, which will be held October 4-6 in Boulder, Colo. Goldman's workshop will examine the opposition movement to the Persian Gulf war—a movement that SEAC participated in last year.

Although SEAC took an active stand against the war, it didn't make the war its exclusive focus. "There were people who wanted us to take a stronger stand against the war. But when we took a poll of the national committee (comprised of SEAC's 17 regional heads and three representatives from the Student of Color caucus) the consensus was that there wasn't enough support to make it our central focus."

"What SEAC tried to do was show how environmental issues and anti-war issues fit together," says Goldman. Many of SEAC's anti-war activities were part of the groups corporate accountability campaign that targeted petrochemical firms and other polluting corporations. SEAC representatives have met with officials from the Adolph Coors, Co., IBM and Apple. Says Goldman, "In a lot of cases, we probably have more power as consumers than as voters. And as consumers, students represent a pretty important market."

"Some people thought it was wrong to do multi-issue work while the war was going on," says Goldman. "But when you look at the groups that devoted all their attention to the war, once the war ended so did their work."

Goldman honed his anti-Gulf war tactics at Jimmy's Woodlawn Tap, the Hyde Park institution where he tends bar. In notoriously cloistered Hyde Park, Jimmy's Woodlawn Tap is one of the few places where town and gown interact. Joining the "solid working-class crowd" at the bar have been U. of C. student stiffies like Ed Asner, Mike Nichols and Elaine May.

While those particular regulars might have looked favorably on Goldman's opposition, most of today's clientele feels differently. Says Goldman, "They thought I was pretty silly for getting so upset about the war. Generally, they'd say, 'I don't think it's a good thing, but I support it.' Right on the surface, there was an acceptance of what was being done. But if you talk to them about their concerns about paying for their health care coverage or putting their kids through college, then they were interested. And then when you talked about the 50 billion spent on the war rather than health care and education, then they started to make the connections."

For Goldman many of his own political connections were made during his years away from college.

**Traveling man:** In December 1987, Goldman and a friend from school traveled to Central America. Goldman went, he says, "to see with my own eyes what was happening." In Guatemala, during a harrowing barroom encounter, Goldman saw too much of a state security officer and a group of drunken American mercenaries. But elsewhere he was im-

pressed by the "honesty" of the people he met.

After traveling through Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico and Nicaragua, Goldman returned to Chicago in March 1988. But he found the city overwhelming. He says, "I was experiencing the kind of culture shock where you come back and can't handle the local car commercials. I figured it was time to go somewhere quiet."

Goldman headed for Vermont, but the self-imposed solitude didn't last long. In August 1988, he agreed to co-manage the campaign of a 25-year-old candidate for the Vermont state senate. He ran the campaign alongside the man who'd been the second highest ranking official on the Vermont staff of Gary Hart's 1988 presidential campaign. "Of course," says Goldman, "there were only two people in Hart's Vermont campaign." Goldman's candidate finished sixth in a field of six. (Goldman notes, however, that his candidate has since ascended to the Democratic Party's state committee.)

With the campaign over, Goldman moved to San Francisco in January 1989. He hovered around the Mission District art and theater scene, absorbing "an early twenties socio-cultural experience." Goldman laughs, calling it, "very self-indulgent, very self-destructive. I made a lot of money in San Francisco—and spent all of it." Goldman came back to Chicago in November 1989 and started drawing beer at Jimmy's Woodlawn Tap.

**Other Options:** Since his return, Goldman has devoted his attention to a variety of local causes in addition to SEAC. Last January, he began working with the Chicago Electric Options Campaign (CEOC), a community group that's monitoring contract talks between the city and Commonwealth Edison, the private utility whose contract to provide the city electricity is being renegotiated. Commonwealth Edison's rates are among the highest in the nation. Not coincidentally, the company operates more nuclear power plants than any other American utility.

Goldman says working with CEOC has deepened his perspective on the Commonwealth Edison dispute. "I looked at this issue from an environmental perspective, but CEOC also has people coming into it from an economic and social perspective."

Conversely, Jesse Mumm, a CEOC staffer, says Goldman's environmental background has been a definite asset. "Knowing that SEAC is a part of our coalition really adds strength to CEOC. When Jon first came in, I know there were doubts about the ability of a student to deal with the community. But he's chaired some of our membership meetings and impressed everybody."

Goldman, who was elected to the campaign's six-person steering committee in July, says the experience has shown him the potential power of citizen action. "Where the city initially looked like it was going to cave in to Commonwealth Edison, we're finally starting to see some backbone," says Goldman. The city, fulfilling a CEOC wish, recently agreed to study a city takeover of Commonwealth Edison facilities—a move that puts pressure on the utility to soften its negotiating position.

Another recent CEOC success was its early August meeting with Mayor Daley's chief of staff, David Mosen. After attempting to meet with the elusive Mayor Daley, Goldman and a group of other CEOC leaders finally arranged a meeting with Mosen. According to Goldman, "It was a very good talk. Mosen actually seemed to be listening."

Goldman considers that meeting his initiation into Chicago's "power game." What lessons has he learned from his entry into Chicago politics? "I don't have any illusions that one meeting with a government official can substitute for public debate and democratic control. But it makes me hopeful that an organized group of citizens can have some influence in the political process. Of course, we've got a long way to go." □

was killed in that murder-for-hire scheme. However, in 1981, Alfred Alvarez, a Cabazon Indian tribal vice president, and two non-Indians were murdered execution style. Alvarez' sister Linda Streeter Dukic says her brother and his friends died because they were about to expose mismanagement on the Cabazon reservation. Mike Kataoka of the Palm Springs *Press-Enterprise* reports that in 1985, when Nichols was arrested for hiring the hitman, the U.S. Justice Department was investigating his possible involvement in those 1981 deaths. No charges were ever filed.

**Another murder?** The Wackenhut/Cabazon connection was of particular interest to Danny Casolaro, the Washington-based journalist who was found dead in the Martinsburg, W.V., Sheraton on Aug. 10 (see "The First Stone," Sept. 4). Casolaro's friends, family and professional associates fear he was murdered—and that the crime was related to his investigations into a series of corporate and governmental scandals.

Casolaro's brother, Anthony, told the Washington-based *Corporate Crime Reporter*, "Danny was trying to track monies Wackenhut spent and what Danny found was that [Wackenhut] had earmarked a half million dollars for what they called 'research.'"

Anthony Casolaro said that the money "ties in Wackenhut with this Indian reservation and organized crime and CIA guys ... Those same people showed up with Inslaw and one of them shows up in the October Surprise."

The "October Surprise" was the alleged campaign deal between Iran and the 1980 Reagan campaign to delay the release of U.S. hostages held in Tehran (see *In These Times*, June 24, 1987, Oct. 12, 1988 and April 27, 1991.)

"Inslaw" was Inslaw Inc. of Washington, D.C.—a firm that has brought suit in federal court, charging that the Reagan Justice Department stole the company's Promis case-management software program. Two judges have thus far ruled in the company's favor. The suit is still in the courts (see *In These Times*, May 29, 1991.)

Earlier this year, Inslaw further alleged that the Justice Department turned the stolen software over to Earl Brian, a friend of both former President Ronald Reagan and former Attorney General Edwin Meese. Inslaw charges that the software was a payback for Brian's help in arranging the October Surprise. Former Israeli intelligence agent Ari Ben-Menashe alleges that Brian—now the head of United Press International—was directly involved in arranging the 1980 deal. Ben-Menashe claims that Brian "worked very closely" on the deal with Robert Gates, who was then a top CIA official.

**No justice:** Wackenhut is also linked to the Inslaw scandal. Michael Riconosciuto—a weapons-systems designer and software specialist—was director of research for the Wackenhut/Cabazon joint venture in the early '80s. In a March 1991 affidavit for the Inslaw case, Riconosciuto claimed that "in connection with [Riconosciuto's] work for Wackenhut," he modified the stolen Promis software for foreign sales. "Earl W. Brian made [the software program] available to me through Wackenhut after acquiring it from Peter Videnieks, who was then a Department of Justice contracting official with responsibility for the Promis software."

Videnieks, a former Customs Service official under Commissioner Chasen, served in the Justice Department from 1981 through 1990. In his affidavit, Riconosciuto said Videnieks had threatened to retaliate against Riconosciuto if he cooperated with a House Judiciary Committee probe of the Inslaw case. Seven days after filing the affidavit (which was not, technically, part of the committee investigation), Riconosciuto was arrested on drug-selling charges. He is now in a Seattle jail awaiting trial.

## Private spies

The 1980s were a decade of privatization. As a for-profit intelligence service, Wackenhut appears to have taken on the kind of work that in earlier years the FBI and CIA would have done (and still do), albeit illegally.

On the environmental-crime front, Wackenhut is now the object of an investigation by the House Interior Committee. Early in 1990, the Alyeska Pipeline Service Co., a consortium of seven oil companies that run the trans-Alaska oil pipeline, hired Wackenhut to spy on environmentalists, whistleblowers and other oil company critics. Wackenhut tactics included setting up a phoney environmental organization and having agents pose as reporters. It is alleged in press reports that the company also monitored Rep. George Miller (D-CA) whose house subcommittee has been investigating environmental crimes allegedly committed by the consortium which is composed of British Petroleum, Exxon, ARCO, Phillips, Unocal, Mobil and Amerada Hess.



## No defense

They say the best defense is a good offense. Maybe that's what Chicago Bears Coach Mike Ditka is trying to achieve with his Operation Ditka Storm poster. Why else would he dress up like Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf and use the Persian Gulf War to promote his football team's 1991 season? Offensive? You bet. Besides, the comparison doesn't work. The Bears aren't exactly known for their air attack.

## Take a stand

U.S. Senator Tom Harkin has a simple strategy for Democrats who want to do more than crawl through next year's presidential contest. Speaking at a party fundraiser in Sioux City, Ia., earlier this month, the Iowa native said that if the Democrats are serious about running the race, they must first "get off [their] knees." Sound advice from a candidate whose feet are already on the ground. After all, it is easier to run that way.

## The industry whose Time has come

When *Time* magazine tackled the complicated issue of nuclear power this past April, it sought to address a straightforward question: "Do we have a choice?" The answer, technically, is yes. But this choice must be made by an informed populace. *Time*, with a weekly circulation of more than 4 million, informs a lot of people. Or should we say misinforms? According to media watchdog group Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), *Time*'s nuclear power story suffered a factual meltdown. Says FAIR: "While *Time*'s cover story acknowledged that 'reviving the nuclear power industry will surely be one of the most daunting public relations assignments of the century,' it must be asked if *Time* accepted the job without informing its readers." FAIR ran an ad in the September 8 *New York Times* listing *Time*'s errors—most notably the misrepresentation of a report by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS). "The National Academy of Sciences called this month for the swift development of a new generation of nuclear plants to help fight the greenhouse effect," *Time* wrote. But Rob Coppock, the NAS study's staff director, said his group did not use the word "swift," and did not intend its report to be pro-nuclear. Coppock said the notion of "a new generation of nuclear plants is way down at the bottom" of the report. FAIR urged *Time* to "institute its own fail-safe procedures" to prevent further editorial mishaps.

## No fair

But to the editors and writers at *Time* magazine, FAIR's criticism might sound only like the whine of a wacky watchdog. In August, *Time* scrutinized the people who scrutinize its pages. Under the headline "The media's wacky watchdogs," writer Joe Queenan tries to explain just what these kooks do with their time. While acknowledging that some media watchdogs "have a galling charm, a refreshing sassiness, perhaps even a mild sense of humor," Queenan can't help but look down his nose at them. "Watchdog publications allow hobbyists and rank amateurs an opportunity to get their digs in at well-paid professionals," writes Queenan, who likely places himself in the professional camp. He also expresses "the sense that full-fledged journalists could perhaps do a better job than dilettantes as investigative reporters." Not that he wants to squeeze the dilettantes out or anything—he just wants them to be happier people. After all, he writes, "a case can be made that people who write articles critiquing captions in the *New York Times* really ought to get out more."

## In poor health

It may come as no surprise that rural Americans, especially poor rural Americans, have difficulty finding affordable health care. In its new 100-page report, *Limited Access: Health Care for the Rural Poor*, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities found that in 1988 there were only 97 physicians for every 100,000 rural residents, compared with 225 physicians per 100,000 residents in urban areas. While 111 rural counties had no physician at all, no urban county was without one. Many rural areas lack maternity and pediatric-care providers who will accept Medicaid patients, a problem compounded by a general lack of health-insurance coverage. Among the study's recommendations are increased funding for the National Health Service Corps and for community and migrant health centers, and more inclusive Medicaid provisions at both state and federal levels.

# IN SHORT



## In Mexico, Salinas acts fast to cover up fraud

MEXICO CITY—How much Mexican President Carlos Salinas de Gortari was influenced by a *Wall Street Journal* editorial condemning fraud in the August 18 national election is difficult to know. But this much is apparent: the day the August 29 editorial appeared, Salinas did what no Mexican president in modern history has ever done—he forced an elected governor from his own party to resign and replaced him with a member of an opposition party.

The *Journal* wrote that Salinas should "sweep away this cloud" about electoral fraud and order "a re-run of the disputed election in the state of Guanajuato." Later in the day, Salinas did exactly that.

Under Salinas' direction, the governor-elect of Guanajuato, Ramon Aguirre, announced his resignation. Aguirre, a colorless former mayor of Mexico City, had faced mounting electoral-fraud protests led by his chief rival, Vicente Fox Quesada of the conservative National Action Party (PAN).

In Aguirre's place, the state legislature, dominated by the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), surprisingly appointed Carlos Medina Plascencia, a member of the PAN and the mayor of the city of León, to serve as interim governor. The move made Medina only the second non-PRI governor in more than six decades. Medina immediately promised that a special election would be held sometime in the near future to elect a permanent governor.

When the dust cleared, the country's usually jaded voters and political observers were mystified. Fraudulent elections followed by massive public protests are nothing new in Mexico. Through its 62 years in

power, the PRI has maintained its political dominance through a combination of patronage, cooptation and fraud. Last month's elections were no different: the ruling party gained 63 percent of the vote (see *In These Times*, Sept. 4). And yet in the wake of the election an apparently victorious PRI candidate was resigning, citing a need to "preserve the peace and harmony of the state."

While government leaders scrambled to portray the resignation as an act of "democratic will," Salinas' power play had little to do with a recognition of political plurality. Instead, it seemed largely designed to cater to business interests in an attempt to gather support for a proposed free-trade agreement with the United States and Canada. Using his broad unchecked powers known euphemistically as *presidencialismo*, Salinas had negotiated a behind-doors political deal to consolidate support from the conservative, business-oriented PAN and prove to financial leaders on both sides of the border that he can quickly squelch political unrest.

"[Guanajuato] reveals ... that the real power in Mexico today resides in Mexican financiers who are now inextricably linked with international financial interests," wrote columnist Adolfo Gilly in the daily *La Jornada*. "The current economic restructuring demands a political correlation." Gilly added that PAN President Luis Alvarez would not have agreed to the changes in Guanajuato "if he did not have substantial guarantees of a greater integration of his [the PAN's] political platform in the recomposition of the system."

Indeed, Fernando Estrada, a PAN strategist, explained that unless the government took action in Guanajuato, his party was seriously considering withdrawing its support of the Salinas presidency and forging stronger ties with the leftist Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD). Al-

though Salinas faces little domestic opposition to the free-trade pact, opposition from the PAN, whose strength lies in the north next to the U.S. border, would be costly.

With Aguirre's fall and Medina's ascension, the noisy PAN protests that had grabbed the *Journal*'s initial attention came to a grinding halt. Fox, the PAN gubernatorial candidate, had initially captured the imagination of the state's voters by organizing huge rallies, sit-ins and highway blockades. Fox had charged that Aguirre had won through stuffed ballot boxes and other typical electoral fraud. Salinas undoubtedly feared that the Guanajuato protests could become violent, making the state ungovernable and drawing further attention to post-election unrest still fuming in the states of San Luis Potosi and Sonora.

The aftermath of the 1991 national mid-term elections demonstrated that nearly everything Salinas does he does in an effort to gather support for the free-trade pact. With three years remaining in his term, Salinas unquestionably wants to be remembered as the president who changed the face of Mexico's economy and signed a free-trade agreement with the two giant nations to its north.

In retrospect, the *Journal* editorial was in all likelihood the coincidence PRI leaders said it was. "The editorial probably played a role in Salinas' decision, but it was secondary," said Juan Molinar, a political science professor at the University of California-San Diego. "Salinas wanted to ensure continued support from the PAN and stop the protests from spreading."

The sudden power play by Salinas, though, more than satisfied his U.S. sponsors. In a fawning follow-up editorial on September 3, the *Journal* wrote that Salinas "took a giant step forward last week toward full political maturity" by ordering the special election.

The Mexican electorate was less convinced. Columnist Guillermo Fabela Quiñones wrote in the daily *El Universal* that the events in Guanajuato left voters with "more doubts and uneasiness about the democratic future of the country." PAN spokesman Alberto Antonio Loyola added, "There is nothing democratic about Medina becoming governor. The fraud that was committed in the first place still has not been investigated or acknowledged."

With the elections apparently behind him, Salinas will now move full speed ahead on his mission to secure the free-trade pact with his wealthier northern neighbors. Political democracy, the second half of Salinas' original presidential promise, has taken on a supportive role to his overriding aim. In the words of historian Lorenzo Meyer, Salinas wants "perestroika without glasnost."

—Leon S. Lazaroff



By Christine Keyser

PRESCOTT, ARIZ.

**H**IGHWAY 89 WINDING DOWN FROM THE Grand Canyon climbs through red boulders and buttes a few miles north of this mile-high mountain town in a setting straight out of a Hollywood western.

Here in a federal courtroom above the downtown post office some of the fastest legal guns in the West spent the summer dueling it out in a conspiracy trial that the

## CONSPIRACY

FBI hoped would "send a message" to radical environmentalists to hang up their monkey-wrenches.

The trial of Earth First! co-founder Dave Foreman and four Prescott activists for an alleged conspiracy to sabotage nuclear facilities in three states was widely viewed as a government crackdown on "green power."

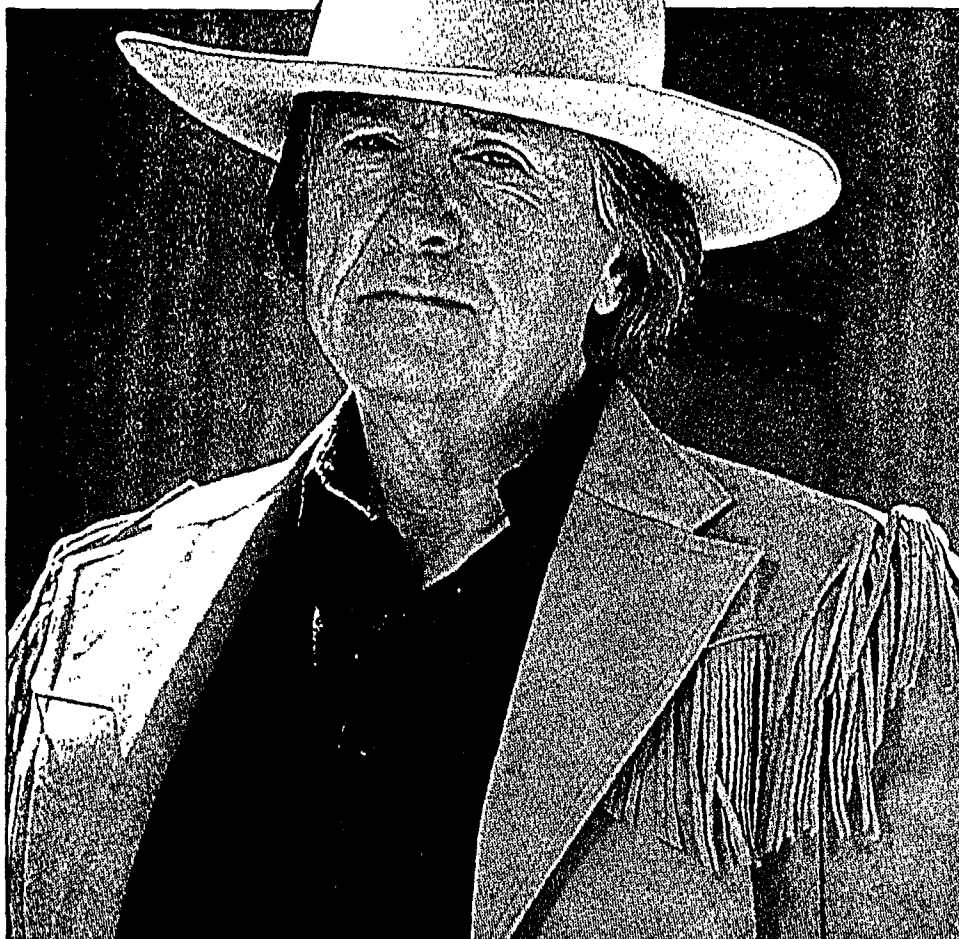
Federal prosecutors portrayed the "Arizona Five" as a gang of "malicious terrorists willing to risk a nuclear meltdown to further their credo "No compromise in defense of Mother Earth." "You will learn that this case is about anarchy and revolution," Assistant U.S. Attorney Roslyn Moore-Silver told the jury. She denounced Foreman's book *EcoDefense: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching* as a "manifesto" for eco-terrorism.

But halfway through the trial, on August 13, the prosecution abruptly dropped its nuclear conspiracy case and accepted a plea bargain to lesser charges involving vandalism of a ski lift above Flagstaff. The deal left the defendants with sentences considerably more lenient than what they faced—although the alleged "ringleader" drew a six-year federal prison term. Such a maneuver is virtually unheard of in a federal trial, much less a sensational political case that had climaxed a \$2 million FBI undercover investigation. But the defendants' volunteer team of legal sharpshooters, led by legendary Gerry Spence of Jackson Hole, Wyo., had shot holes in the government's case and discredited the star prosecution witness, a paid FBI informant who lied on the witness stand.

**Shades of Hoover:** To environmentalists and civil libertarians, the Arizona Five trial signaled a new era of government intrusion, reminiscent of the FBI's domestic surveillance program during the Vietnam War. Government documents indicate that the FBI began infiltrating Earth First! as early as 1983, sending undercover agents to the group's annual summer rendezvous.

Earth First!, an irreverent tribe notorious for "monkeywrenching"—sabotage in the name of ecology—had become a costly thorn in the side of corporate developers, ranchers and timber and mining interests. By driving metal spikes into old-growth trees, decommissioning bulldozers and performing other acts of eco-sabotage, these controversial ecologists had cost natural-resource industries millions of dollars a year.

Although Earth First! had focused solely on saving wilderness, the FBI interrogated Foreman's housemate, Roger Featherstone, in connection with the May 1986 sabotage of high-voltage lines to the Palo Verde nuclear power plant west of Phoenix. Then, in January 1988, a drifter named Ron Frazier walked into the Phoenix FBI office to turn in his former Prescott comrades for vandalizing



Attorney Gerry Spence argued that the FBI entrapped defendants.

## Earth First! trial shows FBI flair for deception

a Flagstaff ski lift. Thus began an 18-month investigation involving some 100 FBI agents who infiltrated Earth First!, wiretapped the defendants' homes and recorded nearly 1,000 hours of private conversations.

The investigation culminated in a dramatic bust in the Arizona desert on the night of May 30, 1989, when 50 heavily-armed agents swept down on three of the defendants as they prepared to cut a power line to a state water project. Early the next morning, FBI agents burst into Foreman's Tucson bedroom brandishing their guns, hustling the one-time Young American for Freedom off to jail in his shorts. The arrests sent shock waves through environmental circles across the country. In the following weeks, a federal grand jury in Phoenix subpoenaed dozens of potential co-conspirators in four states. The grand jury handed down a seven-count indictment charging the defendants with conspiring to sabotage California's Diablo Canyon and Palo Verde nuclear power plants and Rocky Flats nuclear weapons plant outside Denver.

The charges included vandalizing the Snow-bowl ski resort above Flagstaff and the Canyon Uranium Mine just south of the Grand Canyon, both constructed on sacred Native American sites despite the vigorous objections of local tribes. The defendants also were charged with conspiring to cut a transmission line to the controversial Central Arizona Project (CAP), which diverts Colorado River water to suburban Phoenix and Tucson. If convicted of all charges, the defendants would have faced maximum sentences of up to 40 years in federal prison and \$250,000 apiece in fines.

**Psychotage:** When the trial finally got underway in June after a two-year delay, the defense forcefully argued that the FBI had

entrapped the defendants in a phony conspiracy aimed at derailing Earth First!. Spence had gotten his hands on some revealing evidence of FBI foul play: a secret tape recording by undercover agent Michael Fain obtained in a pre-trial discovery. Forgetting to turn off his body wire, Fain had boasted to a fellow agent that Foreman "isn't really the guy we need to pop. I mean, in terms of actual perpetrator. This is the guy we need to pop to send a message. And that's all we're really doing."

Spence—renowned for never having lost a case—denounced the FBI's tactics as "psychotage." He charged the government with trampling Foreman's First Amendment rights to speak and write his mind. "What

**To environmentalists and civil libertarians, the Arizona Five trial signaled a new era of government intrusion reminiscent of the FBI's domestic surveillance program during the Vietnam War.**

my client did is write about the defense of Mother Earth, and they don't like it," he said.

Louisiana attorney Wellborn Jack Jr. exposed FBI snitch Ron Frazier as a paranoid habitual LSD user who went to the FBI after losing out in a love triangle with defendants Ilse Asplund and Mark Davis. Under cross-examination, Frazier said that had he not turned informant he would have had to "pull

a Rambo" and kill his Earth First! comrades at the group's summer rendezvous in 1988.

Frazier recounted how the FBI put him through a five-hour hypnosis session, equipped him with a body wire and paid him nearly \$54,000 to spy on his former friends. A welder by trade, Frazier taught Mark Davis how to use a propane torch to cut power lines and lured the cabinetmaker into a scheme to buy incendiary thermite grenades from a phony army source. But under cross-examination, Frazier acknowledged that Davis drew the line when Frazier urged him to use explosives, stressing that monkeywrenching was not supposed to terrorize people. When Davis told Frazier he planned to give up monkeywrenching in order to organize a clearing-house for grassroots environmental groups, the FBI sent Fain in to crack the case.

Masquerading as Mike Tait, an emotionally wounded Vietnam vet, Fain coozied up to Prescott singer Peg Millett and exploited her friendship with Foreman's wife, Nancy Morton, to draw the Earth First! icon into the conspiracy. To prove his commitment, Fain tried his hand at monkeywrenching and romanced Millett's friend, a divorced widow with two small children.

Fain drove Davis to Tucson to get a \$580 check from Foreman. The FBI claimed the money was earmarked for thermite grenades to burn power lines to nuclear plants. But Foreman, who viewed nuclear power as a dead horse, wanted no part of the scheme, saying, "It's a hell of a risk for an apparently unclear message," according to a secret tape recording made by Fain. Davis, too, had resisted the bait, arguing for hitting the CAP transmission lines instead of Palo Verde. A frustrated Fain then drove Davis, Millett and botanist Marc Baker out to the FBI ambush at the desert CAP station.

Fain was due to testify next, and many courtroom spectators were eagerly looking forward to watching the high-powered defense team expose the FBI's "dirty tricks." But they didn't get that opportunity. Faced with the prospects of a lengthy trial and unsure of winning acquittals from the small-town conservative jury, the defense attorneys cut a deal with the prosecution.

Davis pled guilty to vandalizing the Snow-bowl ski resort in October 1987 and received the stiffest sentence—a six-year federal prison term—and was ordered to pay nearly \$20,000 in restitution. Millett pled guilty to aiding and abetting the felony; Asplund and Baker pled guilty to failing to notify law-enforcement authorities about the crime. They await sentencing later this month. Foreman, who most observers felt would have been acquitted, pled guilty to conspiracy to damage property by handing a copy of his book to Frazier with the inscription "happy wrenching." He walked off with five years' probation and the possibility of having his conviction reduced to a misdemeanor.

"Did the government get what it set out to win in this case? Obviously not," reflected Wellborn Jack Jr., one of the nation's top trial lawyers who worked for the defense. Yet he warned that environmentalists have some bitter lessons to learn from the Arizona Five conspiracy trial. "I think the government achieved its purpose with the indictment. They made it reasonable for anyone in the environmental movement to be suspicious of who they talk to."

**Christine Keyser** is a journalist living in Berkeley, Calif.





# Why Bush voucher plan would be a poor choice

By John B. Judis

WASHINGTON

**P**RESIDENT GEORGE BUSH HAS BEGUN HIS RE-election campaign by touting his education program, "America 2000." In a Sept. 3 speech in Lewiston, Me., Bush tried to show that he cares about what happens inside the United States. "Everyday brings new evidence of crisis," Bush told the parents and students at Lewiston High School. On Oct. 1, Bush will make a televised address to the nation's schoolchildren on the crisis.

But the real crisis in education may be in the White House rather than in Maine or the other states. Instead of proving that he has a domestic agenda, Bush's education offensive has reconfirmed the fact that his social policies—America 2000 in particular—stem as much from political calculation as from disinterested reflection on America's social ills.

**Important components:** Bush first introduced America 2000 last April. In May, the House and Senate Republican leadership

introduced bills embodying the plan's recommendations. The administration is now pressing for a vote in October, but the bills probably won't get to the floor until next year.

America 2000 has three key provisions:

- It would provide incentives for school districts and states to adopt "choice" programs that give parents vouchers with which they can pay for either public- or private-school education.

- It would institute voluntary national tests in five core subjects that would be used to evaluate schools and college applicants.

- It would establish corporate-funded model schools in each congressional district to inspire local innovations.

Of these provisions, the administration's plan for choice is by far the most controversial and politically suspect. Unlike other proposals for choice, America 2000's voucher plan would subsidize private schools at the expense of public schools.

Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander presents the voucher system as means of

making education more democratic. With the voucher plan, Alexander argues, the poor could enjoy the same alternatives as the rich. "They can find a better school for their children or use that leverage to improve the school their children now attend," Alexander writes.

But in fact, the administration's voucher program could have the opposite effect. By subsidizing private schools, the voucher plan could widen class divisions—enriching private schools attended by the middle and upper classes while robbing much-needed

## EDUCATION

funds from the public schools that the poor will continue to attend.

**Choice vs. vouchers:** The administration's plan muddies the distinction between public-school choice programs, such as those in Minnesota or East Harlem (see story on opposite page), and voucher programs. By allowing parents to choose which public schools their children attend, choice programs would encourage parental participation and curricular diversity. They would also apply competitive pressure on incompetent principals and teachers.

Like all programs, public-school choice could backfire if poorly designed. Massachusetts, for instance, put a choice pro-

gram into effect this month. When students from one district attend school in a neighboring district, the neighboring district gets the funds that would have gone to the students' home district. As a result, districts have an incentive to recruit students from other areas. But since the state does not pay for transportation, only the more well-to-do students will tend to transfer. This only makes rich districts richer and poor districts poorer. But these kinds of problems can be resolved by tinkering. At least in principle, public-school choice is more democratic than the rigid, bureaucratized systems that rule many districts.

Vouchers pose exactly the opposite problem. In some isolated instances, they could probably function harmlessly—but they are undemocratic in principle. In Epsom, N.H., a small homogeneous town without a public high school, the town provided \$1,000 in tax rebates to families whose children attended private schools rather than the neighboring public school. Before the state Supreme Court threw out the plan on a technicality, a mere 12 out of 180 students took advantage of the rebate to attend Catholic and Christian schools in Concord.

But when applied on a wider scale, vouchers would subvert public democracy. By subsidizing church schools, vouchers would threaten the separation of church and state. And more important, by funding private schools at the expense of public schools, they could imperil the only school system that is open to everyone, regardless of background, income, and ability.

Proponents of various voucher schemes have tried unsuccessfully to get around potential class bias. In 1982, the Reagan administration introduced a plan that would have provided parents earning less than \$50,000 with vouchers that by 1985 would be worth \$500 a year. Under this plan, the poor would still not have been able to afford private schools—even the least expensive Catholic schools run about \$2,500 a year. The main beneficiaries would have been middle-class Catholics and fundamentalists whose children were already attending private religious schools.

America 2000 provides no guidelines about how large vouchers should be, but conservatives close to the administration favor a plan that would give individuals as much as \$2,500 a year. This approach would mean a windfall to the middle-class Catholics and fundamentalists and to private boarding schools. In theory, it would also allow the poor to attend the lower rung of private schools. But unlike in public schools, poor children would have to meet competitive admissions standards and they would have to travel out of their neighborhoods.

In Milwaukee, Wis., an alliance of conservative Republicans and black nationalists sought to test whether vouchers could work in the inner city. The results were not encouraging. The state made 1,000 low-income students eligible for \$2,500 a year in vouchers that they could use in the city's non-sectarian private schools. Over 60,000 students were eligible, but only 600 decided to take advantage of the program. Fourteen of the city's 21 private schools refused to accept the vouchers, and of those that did, some were motivated by mercenary considerations. One religious school discontinued its Bible classes in order to win funding, causing a year-long conflict between non-voucher parents and the school administration that climaxed in the school's closing. By the year's end, only 252 students were still en-

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rolled in the city's voucher program.

**Contradictory impulses:** The administration's support for vouchers reflects contradictory political impulses. Some conservatives such as Alexander genuinely believe that vouchers are a free-market remedy for the corrupt, inefficient school districts that often service poor communities.

But other conservatives are more concerned about reaping political advantage from a program that appeals primarily to "Reagan Democrats"—white ethnic voters and Southern fundamentalists who often back Democratic congressional candidates, but who voted for Reagan in 1980 and 1984 and Bush in 1988. Vouchers subsidize these politically critical voters.

Bush's program undoubtedly reflects both motives, but with an election approaching, one should not underestimate the political gains that the administration hopes to make from its advocacy of vouchers. It is probably no accident that administration spokesmen stress this part of America 2000 when presenting the program.

The other parts of Bush's program have sparked debate among educators, but are not as politically explosive. Some educators claim national tests are unfeasible and unfair to minorities. Critics further charge that the tests would encourage instructors to teach their students how to take multiple-choice tests rather than how to read or do algebra. The National Education Association (NEA), which regularly opposes any public intrusion into the classroom, is fighting the tests. But American Federation of Teachers President Albert Shanker backs them as a necessary evil.

Shanker is right. The tests, however simple-minded, are an important way to pres-

sure errant school districts and could contribute to reducing the disparity in educational achievement between the South and the rest of the country. They could also help ensure that high-school graduates are able to read and to do elementary mathematics. Indeed, *Newsweek's* Robert Samuelson argues persuasively that the administration should make a satisfactory score on the tests mandatory for federal college loan applications.

The last major provision of America 2000, the model-schools program, draws criticism from some educators who claim that the money would be better spent on existing schools. But since the money would initially come from business and since the schools would benefit their districts, this argument doesn't carry much weight. A more serious objection is that the model-schools approach assumes that better educational performance will flow primarily from introducing the latest gimmickry into the classroom rather than from transforming the school's social milieu—whether by increasing parental participation or by providing jobs or college admittance for graduating seniors.

**Two crises:** The greatest problem with Bush's program is what it ignores or confuses rather than what it stands for. In justifying America 2000, administration officials repeatedly conflate two different kinds of crises: the poor showing of even the best American students when compared to students from other countries, and the marked deterioration of inner-city and rural-Southern schools. The two emergencies demand different solutions.

The failure of American students to excel internationally can probably be dealt with through providing greater incentives for ex-

cellence and improving the status and income of scientists and school teachers (as compared to junk bond dealers and lobbyists). But improving education in Milwaukee or rural West Virginia is a far greater challenge and will require far greater federal expenditures. It cannot be dealt with by simply lecturing parents, as Bush did in Lewiston.

The Bush administration argues that spending more money in poor districts won't necessarily improve performance, because many of the districts wouldn't know what to do with the money. There is some truth in this. Bloated and inefficient school administrations in Washington, D.C., and Newark, N.J., spend more per capita on students than many fancy suburban districts, but squander the money on administrative overhead and political favors to contractors. Yet once administration is reformed, money can become very important, making it possible to reduce class size and to conduct classes in clean, safe facilities. One lower-income school district in Richmond, Calif., significantly improved student performance by offering new programs, but last spring the district went bankrupt, and the schools had to close temporarily.

Yet there is another dimension to the inner-city school crisis that neither America 2000 nor new expenditures on education address. Success in school is usually based on some expectation that one is on a journey that will lead eventually to a productive life, but students in rural West Virginia or Southeast Washington, D.C., don't enjoy these kind of expectations. Rather, they face the prospect of spending their adult lives in the unemployment or welfare line.

Conservatives and some liberals argue

that improving education will bring jobs to poor districts, but they have the argument backwards. Without the visible prospect of jobs, education will not improve. And to create these jobs, the federal government has to come up with an economic development strategy.

Milwaukee is an obvious example. Its inner-city schools have fallen apart over the last 15 years—during the time that manufacturing jobs were vanishing. Newly created white-collar jobs were often filled by whites from the surrounding suburbs. From 1979 to 1983 alone, Milwaukee lost a fourth of its manufacturing jobs. More than one in five Milwaukee blacks are now unemployed—not because they are unwilling to work, but because they are unable to find jobs. Families have disintegrated; crime and drugs are rampant. In this environment, school reform, whether through vouchers or increased expenditures, is futile.

The real problem with Bush's education program is that it has no answer to this deeper problem of economic development. And it is unlikely to look for one—at least before the 1992 election. Significant spending on Milwaukee would not only violate the Bush's precepts of laissez-faire economics, but would also threaten conservative Republican political strategy, which has been based on wooing Reagan Democrats who believe the government is already spending too much on blacks and on cities. The man who made Willie Horton famous in 1988 is not likely to risk this vote.

But as long as the administration fails to consider the link between education and economic development, there is no reason to take Bush's education program seriously. It remains politics and not policy. □

## A New York district's choice for schools

By David Moberg

IN THE DEBATE OVER SCHOOL REFORM, "CHOICE" is a simple slogan that covers a complex, murky reality. Choice means freedom for parents to send their children to any school they want. And most advocates and opponents tend to agree, with either enthusiasm or fear, that choice means abandoning public schools.

But that isn't necessarily true. Pioneering New York City educator Deborah Meier, who in 1974 founded a widely heralded alternative public school in East Harlem, argues that choice—for parents, children and teachers—is essential in reforming the U.S. public school system.

"If you agree there's more than one definition of an educated person and more than one way to get there, you need choice," she argues.

Meier's Central Park East elementary school was established when former New York District Four Superintendent Tony Alvarado set out to transform East Harlem's ailing schools. When Alvarado started, the district, comprised of 15,000 mainly poor African-American and Hispanic students, was one of New York's worst. Now, the district is near average for the city. In 1973, 16 percent of students read at or above grade level; by 1987, 63 percent did.

How did it happen? Conservative choice advocates may think the answer is clear: parents were given the opportunity to choose schools, and—once again—the free market's invisible hand worked wonders.

But the story's not that simple. Alvarado started by inviting three educators—including Meier—to start alternative schools. He carved out separate spaces in existing buildings and protected the new schools from hostile school system bureaucrats. When other teachers or principals complained about special treatment for the alternatives, he told them that if they showed some innovation and started their own school, they'd get special treatment too.

Few of the schools were as educationally innovative as Central Park East, which created a collegial environment and drew on progressive educational traditions. Meier's school emphasized strong, personalized support for each student and opposed student tracking, traditional disciplinary techniques and selective admissions. But like Central Park East all the new schools were small; most had staffs that shared a common outlook on teaching. Eventually more than 50 separate schools occupied 22 buildings.

As the number of alternative schools grew over the first decade of innovation, Alvarado made choice the norm for the whole district, even though some schools remained nominal neighborhood schools. Unlike the city's magnet school program, District Four provided children and parents extensive information to help them make intelligent choices. Some of the District Four schools have admissions criteria, but most students get into one of their first three choices.

**First choices:** Diane Harrington, a researcher at Columbia University's Teachers

College and former curriculum developer in District Four, argues that "people didn't set out to create choice but to create effective schools, and choice resulted 9 or 10 years down the road. I think it's really backwards

### EDUCATION

to set out to create choice. If you start with a system that's failing, what kind of choice is that for kids, parents or teachers?"

Alvarado, whose commitment to choice was pragmatic rather than ideological, has said that choice by itself in big city schools

**"People didn't set out to create choice but to create effective schools, and choice resulted nine or 10 years down the road."**

systems would be "like rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic."

Meier agrees with Alvarado's critique of choice by itself, but insists that choice was important from the beginning of the District Four experiment. Because Alvarado wanted new and different schools, created from scratch by experienced, committed professionals, she says, "you had to give professionals choice, and you had to give parents

choice, or else they would have been angry." Many parents resist change, and if teachers are to be allowed to innovate, she says, there must be a way for them to find sympathetic parents.

In the traditional school, teachers either have to strike a compromise, simply follow bureaucratic rules, or go their own individual ways. But children—and teachers—need "to join powerful, passionate communities" in order to learn, Meier argues.

Reform must be created from the ground up in small, autonomous, collegial schools, and can't be imposed from a central authority, she contends. "You can't build a school around a viewpoint if you don't allow people to have autonomy." Although Meier has strong ideas about education, she believes that what's important is not the immediate implementation of her specific strategies but rather the creation of hundreds of innovative schools with committed teachers. "The main reason [for the success in District Four] was that kids were in environments where they were less demoralized, where teachers were less demoralized, where schools were smaller and more humane," she says. "The next big leap would be pedagogical."

At first, top officials of the teachers union were fairly cooperative, in part because the changes gave teachers more power. But some union representatives have resisted the change because alternative schools didn't always follow bureaucratic and contractual rules.

For one three year period, District Four's alternative schools also had to struggle with an unsympathetic district superintendent. And the city school board's central bureaucrats, who prefer principals that simply carry

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# Schools

Continued from preceding page

out their dictates, have always been hostile. They prefer a uniform system that can be easily measured and monitored, and continue to kill off alternative schools throughout the school system. "A very large number of things we do in our schools aren't allowed by the system," Meier says. "In those circumstances, I need a benign boss, or better yet, formal autonomy and power."

When Alvarado was around, he helped the alternatives by creative use of special federal funds. But Meier says that even before the funds dried up during the Reagan years, each alternative school received only about \$15,000 a year in extra support. The schools relied primarily on the extra effort of dedicated teachers and some creative reallocation of available funds.

But despite the limited extra costs of alternative schooling, Meier argues that the schools need more money for libraries, after-school programs, sports and other activities that "children deserve quite apart from whether it raises test scores."

**Time is money:** Columbia's Harrington says most educational reforms will require teachers to spend more time with students—time to work with them individually and time to evaluate them without an over-reliance on standardized tests. And even though cutting bureaucracy and other reallocation of resources can help, ultimately "time costs money."

Meier wants to "enrich our idea of what public education can be like," and to do so choice—for professionals and parents both—is critical. But she rejects the marketplace model for education as a "most dangerous illusion." Meier says, "I'm for some qualities of an entrepreneurial school,

in the sense that people feel some commitment and ownership. But we certainly know that institutions driven by the marketplace don't respond to common moral considerations needed in school. If school policy is market driven, it will be like Saturday morning TV." Meier notes that even private schools that are educationally very conservative offer small classes and a coherent message.

Unfortunately, educational debates often focus on school government, when the creation of strong, small teaching communities is most important. Meier says "We've made the running of schools complex and the knowledge we give kids simple. We need it the other way around."

Many big city systems responded to this challenge by creating smaller, more personalized magnet schools. But the magnet schools, often half-hearted choice systems designed to provide minimal desegregation or halt white flight, have actually worsened

educational inequities.

Two critics of such magnet plans, New York-based education and children advocates Janet Price and Jane Stern, concluded that District Four's choice strategy avoided such problems by providing most students with a meaningful choice as part of a "coherent, districtwide scheme."

"It wasn't parents having choice that created alternative schools with motivated teachers," argues Adelphi University School of Education associate dean Peter Cookson. "There was choice because these schools were created." Sy Fliegall, a key aide to Alvarado, has written that District Four's system of choice and alternative schools emerged slowly, organically. "Choice has to be approached carefully and slowly," he concluded. "When I hear about a school district deciding to become a complete choice system in one blow, I worry."

But choice for both teachers and students, working together in small, autonomous schools, Meier insists, is necessary even if it is not enough to transform the public schools. "We need small schools driven by a few people with wonderful ideas," she says. "There's no other way."

## YOU CAN FOOL SOME OF THE PEOPLE SOME OF THE TIME, BUT....

### THE AMERICAN ISRAELI POLITICAL CONTROL ASSOCIATION AIPCA MEMORANDUM WE KNOW WHERE YOU ARE. YOU DON'T NEED TO KNOW WHERE WE ARE

August 12, 1991

#### Ten Billion Dollar U.S. Loan Guarantees for Israel: Your Marching Orders

For years, we've outdone ourselves tossing out hoops for Congress to jump through. We're proud to say that we've surpassed even our own expectations with the \$10 billion loan guarantee—the ultimate hoop—and the most exorbitantly risky and outrageous proposition yet. Finally, our dream can become a reality. Here's how! First, we get some of our friends to believe, or at least pretend, that these are *really* loans which Israel will *really* repay. Then, we convince them that this is purely "humanitarian aid" with no relation whatsoever to the 40,000 new settlement units Israel announced last month. Finally, we hoodwink our friends into believing that Israel will still come to the peace talks in October after Congress gives it the \$10 billion in September. This might seem a bit much to expect—but then what are "friends" for?

Here are some of our winning arguments. You should study them.

#### Trust us, the money is for the immigrants:

- Israel had originally budgeted \$10 billion of its own funds over the next five years for such essential activities as building new settlements, maintaining thousands of defense forces in the West Bank and Gaza, and buying bulk supplies of rubber bullets. When Israel found out the Soviet immigrants were coming, it had to revise its spending plans and reallocate most of those funds to finance the massive resettlement. Now, with \$10 billion from the U.S. dedicated to the absorption, Israel has no need to disrupt its original plan.
- The successful absorption of Soviet immigrants over the next five years is Israel's second highest priority. Israel's first priority is figuring out how to continue getting handouts without having to give up a single inch of the "administered" territories.

#### Those "deep pockets" in the United States:

- "Guaranteeing loans" for Israel, up to \$2 billion a year for the next five years (we always say it this way so some people don't realize it's \$10 BILLION), is the best way we think the United States can justify sending Israel lots of money and not have too much to say about what Israel does with it. Guarantees are not grants—at this point, we can say truthfully that not one penny of U.S. government funds will be transferred to Israel through these guarantees. Later, however, when it's clear that Israel hasn't a snowball's chance in hell of paying them back, and that some U.S. banks are in danger of going belly-up, we plan to lobby Congress either to have these "loan guarantees" converted to grants, or to just bail out the banks (something Congress should be quite good at by then).

#### Many benefits for America:

- The U.S. will not need to figure out which critical domestic program—housing, job training, education—actually deserves all or part of the \$10 billion. One simple loan guarantee to Israel eliminates those tough decisions.
- Ted Koppel will have something else to talk about.
- Our staff are so busy lobbying Congress and producing memoranda such as this that they don't have the time to keep track of what members of Congress and the Senate we plan to target for removal in the next election.

#### Israel's ability to repay:

- Israel has never defaulted on a loan, and maintains a highly favorable debt portfolio by international standards. This has been a relatively easy feat, in that Israel only pays the interest on its loans, and as mentioned before, Congress manages to convert most of them to grants before any principal is actually due. In fact, AIPCA has been so successful in supporting Israel's financial interests that we are now offering a \$395 course at the Capital Hilton one weekend a month to borrower nations that would like to learn our highly-proven techniques.

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## 'Second Chernobyl' looms in East bloc

By Paul Hockenos

BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

ON DEC. 1, 1974, YUGOSLAV PRESIDENT Marshal Tito himself laid the cornerstone for the 664-megawatt nuclear reactor in the quiet Slovenian farming village of Krsko. Fifteen years before the downfall of Yugoslav and East bloc communism, the nuclear-energy option looked as concrete to the party-states as their own dictatorial rule.

But today Yugoslavia lies in ruin, and the remnants of Eastern Europe's ambitious nuclear power programs cast an ominous shadow over the region. Five years after the Chernobyl catastrophe next door in the Ukraine, the East and Central European countries continue to rely heavily on the nuclear power generated from outdated and dilapidated reactors.

This summer has been a hot one for those countries with the standard Soviet-design water pressure reactors. The list of accidents and near-misses has grown longer by the week. And civil strife in Yugoslavia has added a potent new factor to disaster scenarios.

**Fire in the Balkans:** The season's worst news by far came from Bulgaria's Kozloduy power station along the Danube. First in mid-July, one of the plant's radioactive waste dumps caught fire. Two weeks later, the Bulgarian government reported that radiation measurements taken outside cracks in the reactor facade and platform were 10 times higher than international safety limits. Last year, a generator accident there forced all Bulgarians to go on a two-hour-on/two-hour-off electricity regimen.

The Kozloduy mishaps came as little surprise to various European inspection teams that have visited the plant's seven reactors in recent years. In June, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) declared the station in "very bad condition," recommending the immediate closure of the two oldest blocks and large-scale renovations for the remaining reactors there. Kozloduy's own directors had already warned that the power plant posed "the danger of a second Chernobyl." Like Chernobyl, the Bulgarian station is one of the few in Europe that lacks containment domes for sealing in escaped radiation.

The June IAEA report savaged Bulgarian reactors. Essential reactor-control equipment was found in dismal condition and basic fire-protection gear was missing everywhere. Wooden planks had been laid in corridors because of leaky oil and water pipes. As the IAEA released the report, the station's Soviet technicians were heading for home, leaving the Bulgarian team woefully undermanned.

The sorry state of the former East bloc partners' nuclear power industries has left all of the countries facing dire energy shortages. Kozloduy, Bulgaria's only nuclear plant, provides more than 40 percent of the country's electrical generating capacity. Czechoslovakia depends on three nuclear plants for a quarter of its electricity, and Hungary relies on its single site for 48 percent of its electricity needs.

With their economies reeling from the cut-off of subsidized Soviet oil, the Easterners feel they have nowhere to turn. The use of

high-sulfur-content soft coal has already devastated their environments. Bulgarian experts claim that the Danube plant's full closure would spark "great economic disaster with unpredictable social consequences."

Yet, early this month, Western European and IAEA pressure forced the Bulgarians to shut down Kozloduy's first and second blocks. The closure was a prerequisite for foreign renovation funds. Bulgaria's Prime Minister Dimitar Popov pleaded for \$50 million to upgrade the other reactors. Otherwise, Popov said, Bulgaria would be unable to survive the coming winter.

Germany's conservative Environmental Minister Klaus Töpfer quickly moved to exploit Bulgaria's predicament. A staunch proponent of atomic energy at home, Töpfer lauded the IAEA's order against Bulgaria. But Töpfer said it would be premature to accept environmentalists' demands to permanently close all Kozloduy's units—whose design is identical to reactors already decommissioned in former East Germany. Töpfer saw no reason why the German plant's dismantled technology couldn't be sold to the Bulgarians as replacement parts.

**New nuclear war:** On the other side of the Balkans, civil war in northern Yugoslavia unveiled a new kind of nuclear threat. Among the warring republics there, Slovenia's Krsko reactor on the Slovenian-Croatian border has become a strategic pawn. Yugoslavia's only nuclear plant produces 15 percent of Slovenia's electricity and 20 percent of Croatia's. The Croatian capital of Zagreb is particularly dependent on Krsko's power. Today, despite heavy aerial bombardment several kilometers away in Croatia, the reactor continues operating at near full capacity. In June, German newspapers reported that saboteurs cut the plant's power lines, briefly spinning the reactor out of control.

Although the reactor is housed in cement casing, experts insist that this in no way secures it from the war that rages on around it. Shortly after federal troops and the Slovene militia clashed in late June, the IAEA demanded the federal government "respect the reactor's inviolability." But federal MiGs routinely swooped down over the Krsko station.

The Slovene intelligence agency, among other sources, charges that the federal army's military escalation plans in Slovenia included a rocket attack on Krsko. "This was not only a theoretical danger but a very practical one," says Dusan Plut, a Green and member of the Slovenian collective state presidency. "Fortunately, there was a cease-

fire before it came to that."

For nuclear power opponents such as Plut, Krsko's precarious position is further evidence that atomic energy has no place in the Balkans. "A catastrophe on the scale of Chernobyl would simply wipe out Slovenia and Croatia and have grave repercussions for all of Europe," he says. "Many hundreds of thousands of people would suffer from life-threatening radioactivity."

Although the cease-fire spares Krsko from fighting between Slovenian troops and the federal army, the reactor—located only 20 miles from Zagreb—remains smack in the middle of the ongoing Serb-Croat conflict. A Guerrilla attack on the station launched by Serb extremists could trigger a meltdown, say experts. Cease-fire negotiations have proposed the creation of a U.N.-patrolled five-mile protection zone around the reactor, but the plan has not yet been implemented.

But with or without armed strife, says reactor specialist Michael Sailer from the Darmstadt Ecological Institute in Germany, the Krsko plant has long been running in scandalous shape. "The steam generators are completely worn out," Sailer warns. The station, which sits on a geological fault line, has reported more than 70 emergency shutdowns since it opened in 1983. Although the Krsko reactor is a more advanced Westinghouse-built U.S. model, IAEA inspections last year found it operating well below international standards.

A potent Yugoslav anti-nuclear movement in the '80s had pressured the federal government to scrap plans for new reactors. Yet today, the Slovenian Greens and their allies in other republics remain far away from shutting down Krsko. Croatia, in particular, suffers an acute energy shortage and has challenged the legality of the federal moratorium on new plants.

**Vienna's angst:** Only an hour's drive from nuclear plants in Hungary, Slovenia and Czechoslovakia, nuclear-free Austria has led a fierce campaign against the dangerous sites. On top of Austria's hit list are Czechoslovakian reactors—Slovakia's four aging reactors in Bohunice and Bohemia's Dukovany blocks.

Over the last year, emergency alarms sounded non-stop in Bohunice, which nuclear power opponents deem a "time-bomb waiting to explode." The reactors there operate without containment shells and emergency cooling systems. Thus, a standard malfunction in the main cooling mechanism could spark a meltdown.

**Some former East bloc countries rely heavily on nuclear power. And the cutoff of subsidized Soviet oil has increased their dependence. But with their poorly designed nuclear plants falling into disrepair, the threat of a catastrophic accident is growing.**

"We must recognize that a severe, uncontrollable nuclear accident could happen any moment at Bohunice," said Manfred Heindler, director of the Austrian Energy Administration Agency and leader of an expert commission that recently returned from Bohunice. "The release of radioactivity on the scale of the Chernobyl meltdown cannot be ruled out." He charged that the station's proposed reconstruction will have no guaranteed impact on its safety.

The litany of accidents at the Czech and Slovak plants—from raging fires to radioactive water seepage—have Central Europe's neighbors on edge. Austria demands that Bohunice be shut down immediately and has even offered Slovakian officials free electricity to

## EASTERN EUROPE

compensate for the loss. But the Slovaks have rejected the deal. The Slovaks blame Hungary for their energy crisis, since Hungary reneged on a planned hydro-electric dam project that would have included Slovakia and Austria.

The West, again, has been only too eager to lend a hand. Experts from the German multinational Siemens and the U.S. firm Westinghouse contend that Bohunice has years of life ahead of it—that is, once it receives the necessary improvements. Bavarian anti-nuclear organizers say that the German atomic industry sees a "second spring" in the East after their own setbacks in the West. Siemens is already providing technology for the construction of several new sites in the Czech lands.

The Czechs and Slovaks envision the future export of nuclear-generated electricity covering the costs of investment. With Western know-how, Czechoslovakian nuclear proponents claim that they can meet Western safety standards. "Why should we import energy from Austria when we can export it?" asked the program's director Dietmar Helme. The International Monetary Fund has also offered financial assistance.

But Antonia Wanische from the Austrian Ecological Institute in Vienna, who is critical of the West's one-sided approach to the issue, says, "Let's make it clear that even modern atomic power plants are hazardous. Certainly, some Western models are equipped with significantly more advanced security systems, yet there are no guarantees. The only really safe reactors are those that have been shut down."

Austria's chancellor has spearheaded an initiative for a Central European "atomic power-free corridor" from the Baltic to the Mediterranean. The project would include the six members of the Hexagonal Alliance—Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Italy, Poland and Yugoslavia. Neither Italy nor Poland has nuclear plants in operation. Hungary has postponed the construction of new reactors at least until the year 2000, although its single operating station will remain on-line.

Anti-nuke organizers hold out little hope that the troubled reactors will actually be shut down. Without exception, the Central and East European leaders find themselves in desperate political and economic straits. The new regimes face a winter of deepening economic collapse and civil discontent in which their first priority will be to retain power. Against such a backdrop the proposals of the Western anti-nuke lobby must appear as luxuries that they can ill afford. □

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South Africans are searching for consensus on their country's economic future.

## By Craig Charney

JOHANNESBURG

**A** DECADE AGO, THE AFRICAN NATIONAL Congress (ANC) proclaimed that capitalism and apartheid were just "two sides of the same bloody coin." To South African business and government, the ANC was public enemy No. 1.

But two months ago, the legalized ANC called on the private sector to help build a new South Africa, and the country's capitalists have extended the olive branch. If it once seemed that the center could not hold, now "everybody is coming into the center," says Johannesburg labor consultant Stu Pennington.

While overseas discussions of South Africa have focused on the negotiations over a new constitution, an equally significant development is the search for a new consensus on the country's economic future. Old arguments over apartheid versus majority rule and capitalism versus socialism have largely given way to a new debate between social democrats and neo-liberals. The outcome will probably be decided at the polls, not the barricades. These changes are encouraging realignment across the color line as the ANC becomes a center-left party and the ruling National Party (NP) the pivot of a multi-racial right.

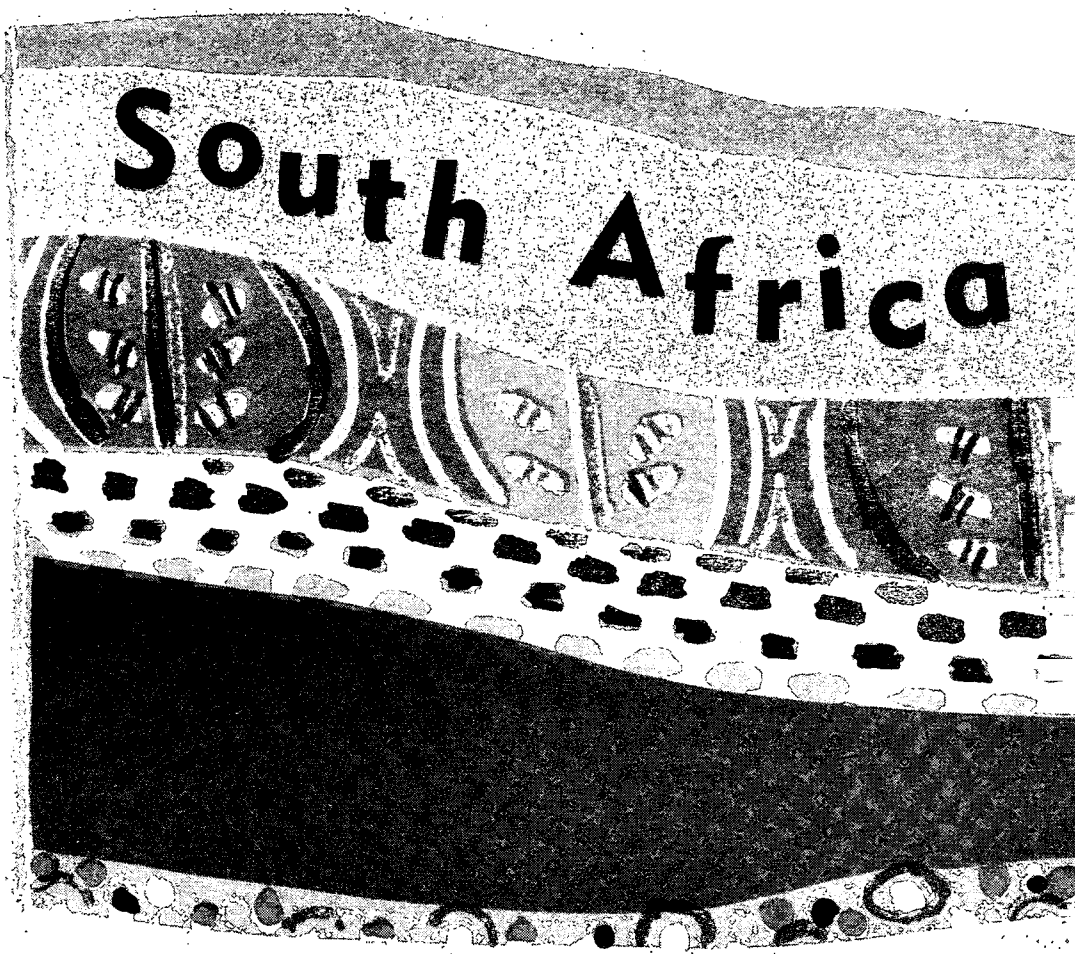
The new economic debate thus encourages optimism about South Africa's long-term prospects, despite the day-to-day ups and downs tied to black township violence, right-wing white resistance and the recent Inkatha scandal. (It was disclosed in July that

the government funded political rallies and a trade union organized by Inkatha, the Zulu tribal party that is virulently opposed to the ANC. See *In These Times*, Aug. 7.) The revised policies favor coexistence by left and right and raise hope for the poor, though they involve compromises and risks as well. They also increasingly reflect the concerns facing other new industrial countries attempting to democratize. This poses a new challenge to progressives abroad, because the less South Africa looks like the old Rhodesia, the more it runs up against development dilemmas like those in Brazil or Mexico.

"On the side of the ANC, a lot of people who a few years ago would have accepted a more radical socialist position now accept a social-democratic position," says Alan Hirsch, a University of Cape Town economic historian who advises the ANC. "The position of the majority of the ANC economists is very clear: most of what's in private hands should remain in private hands."

The distance the ANC has come can be seen from its Freedom Charter of 1955, which proposed nationalizing the country's mines, banks and large industries. The draft of this July's ANC conference policy resolution instead stressed welfare-state measures and affirmative action, although provisions for limited nationalization were added to satisfy the more militant members. (The ANC is still officially shy of the term "social democracy," enabling its ally, the small South African Communist Party, to damn social democrats while backing the ANC program.)

Similar trends are evident, if more tenta-



## Economic realities push the right

tive, within the main black labor federation, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). Edward Webster, professor of sociology at Johannesburg's University of Witwatersrand, says, "I haven't heard anybody [in COSATU] call themselves social democrats, but their practice is looking increasingly like that and their proposals are shifting toward that." Some unionists remain committed to old-line socialism, but many now talk about giving workers a voice in their firms and in economic policy.

"The underlying argument is: we will not nationalize if you are ready to help us solve the problems of inequality in another manner," says Theuns Eloff, executive director of the Consultative Business Movement (CBM), which puts South African business in touch with black politics. Indeed, the ANC agenda focuses on issues of concern to the center-left in other countries: housing, health care, education, pensions and land reform. The ANC's plans would raise the state share of national income to just 35 percent, from 25 percent now.

At the same time, the right has experienced an important but less-appreciated shift from free-market orthodoxy to neo-liberalism. Liberal businessmen long claimed that market forces alone would break down apartheid and ensure everyone's well-being. The political counterpart was a restricted franchise limiting the vote to the small black middle class. The NP, too, became infatuated with Reaganism during the '80s and developed its own form of limited representation, providing powerless parliamentary chambers for the Indian and mixed-race minorities alongside the omnipotent white one.

President F.W. de Klerk's acceptance of universal suffrage last year implied state responsibility for ensuring all citizens' welfare as well. Although his dramatic turnabout on white minority rule was qualified in the NP's recent constitutional proposals, which suggest minority vetoes at all levels of govern-

ment and extra votes for property owners in municipal elections, the principle remains. Even Reserve Bank Managing Director Chris Stals, one of Pretoria's most market-oriented figures, says, "For the rest of the decade, the [budgetary] emphasis will have to be on the social program. You are not going to bring the black people into central government without the black people being able to produce something." First fruits of the new thinking include \$450 million in state funds for black housing and education and \$225 million for victims of political violence.

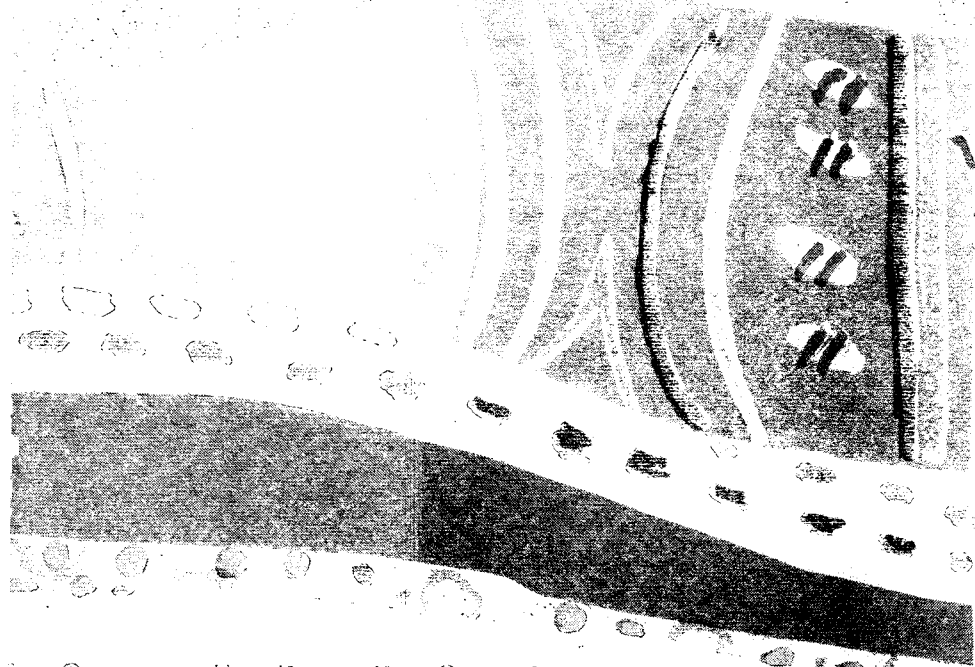
Key business figures have also softened their views. "At this stage," says Arie van der Zwan of the Southern Life Insurance Company, "it would be a minority that would be blind to the fact that economic restructuring with some redistribution is important to the survival of the country." An editorial in *Business Day*, Johannesburg's *Wall Street Journal*, was more emphatic: "Whites are going to pay for much of the new South Africa. It is part of the redistribution—of wealth, of opportunity and of living standards—that is inherent in the removal of the privilege apartheid ensured." Mixing social responsibility and self-interest, business has anted up \$125 million for black schools.

The South Africa Chamber of Business (SACOB) and de Klerk's Economic Advisory Council have both proposed basic safety-net and social-service programs, combined with a market-based growth strategy. But this social expenditure would be funded through defense cuts and by eliminating the duplicative apartheid structures for different races, selling state corporations and corporate gifts. The long-run aim is to cap state spending. In short, the right is South Africanizing the "kinder, gentler" conservatism now preached by U.S. President George Bush, British Prime Minister John Major and the World Bank.

For both sides, these changes mark a substantial break with previous dogma. One sign is that the issue in current policy debates



# centers itself



## left and the left right

here are like those in other democratizing new industrial countries: domestic markets versus export orientation, state intervention and anti-trust policy.

After decades of confrontation, what caused these shifts?

The principal impetus came from the stalemate, following the declaration of a state of emergency in 1986, after two years of black insurrection. Despite draconian repression, the state proved unable to crush the opposition, but it became equally clear that the ANC's rag-tag forces would not soon storm Pretoria. Negotiating a settlement required moderating economic demands, so that votes for all would not make whites risk all. The collapse of the socialist bloc in Eastern Europe also helped, freeing South Africa's left from the taint of Stalinism and the right from its paralyzing fear of communism. Almost as important was the decline of the purist free-market ideas of the Reagan and Thatcher era.

Pressure for compromise was strengthened by the increasingly stark economic crisis. While other semi-industrialized countries suffered from crushing foreign debt, poverty and recession, in South Africa these problems were worsened by partial trade sanctions and political instability. By last year, real gross domestic product per capita was roughly \$3,000, down almost 20 percent from its 1980 peak. Only one job-market entrant in eight found work, compared to three out of four 25 years ago. Labor-repressive apartheid industrialization also produced the world's most skewed income distribution: in 1984, 80 percent of white families had incomes over \$12,000 a year, while 90 percent of black families earned less.

**Making new friends:** The search for an accommodation began in 1985, when leaders of South African business and the ANC met in Lusaka, Zambia. The black nationalists sought a road to power, the white capitalists security for their property—and both sought to bridge the mutual ignorance created by

apartheid. At one dramatic Consultative Business Movement meeting in 1988, ANC sympathizers hammered home the bleak facts of black life in South Africa. "I've never been so humbled in all my life," a prominent company head said afterward.

Six years of such meetings have produced the unheard-of in South Africa: a multiracial economic establishment. Christo Nel, who

co-led the CBM, explains: "We had in South Africa a situation without friendships, no connections. You now find black and white leaders talking on the phone, having lunch. In the transition and post-transition period, relations will exist. We'll be able to get on the phone to [ANC economist] Tito Mboweni and say, 'What are you doing about this tariff?' We have divergences, but we have enough in common to run the country."

Will the result be compromise or cooption? Fears of cooption feed on rumors like one that a top ANC leader has become fond of visiting an opulent wine estate run by the country's biggest firm. Graver are the limits to taxation and expropriation implied by a negotiated transition, which means that even under an ANC government, South Africa's impoverished majority will see many dreams deferred. Yet the political and military situation, along with the restricted choices open to the Third World today, offer few alternatives. Moreover, the redistribution under discussion is hardly symbolic: proposed plans would offer millions of black South Africans housing, electricity, education and power over their working lives.

**The great equalizer:** The shift in the economic debate is also spurring a political realignment based on material interest more than race. All-races electoral competition is likely to produce a party system based on an ANC-linked social democratic bloc and a neo-liberal front of the NP and its allies. This contrasts with the old lineup, where Afrikaner whites voted NP, English whites for the liberal opposition and blacks didn't vote at all.

In the cities, the ANC's big battalions will look like those of other social-democratic parties: trade unions and civic organizations. COSATU, allied with the ANC since its founding in 1985, offers an organized base of 1.25 million black workers (and their families). The civic groups active in hundreds of townships are also ANC allies who favor large-scale, egalitarian government services. (The

ANC's rural base is different, including youth and rebel chiefs—particularly among Nelson Mandela's Xhosa tribe, which is one-fifth of the black population.)

The ANC is also fighting for influential, potentially sympathetic sections of the middle classes. The liberal white Democratic Party's tiny left wing feels its pull—shown when six of its members of Parliament appeared at an ANC demonstration outside Parliament instead of inside the chamber. Many Afrikaner civil servants avow that they would serve under an ANC government, blending reformism and opportunism. Left-wing yuppies trained in the politically-charged '80s—black and white—share an interest in active government. An interventionist government would also appeal to many black businessmen who yearn for the aid that the NP gave Afrikaner capitalists.

The NP has begun to look like a bourgeois liberal party, rallying the English and Afrikaans-speaking middle classes. "They have become one," says Stellenbosch University economist Sampie Terreblanche, "especially in what they say on economic policy." The NP is also courting mixed-race and Indian people, with success, underlined by wholesale defections of members of the mixed-race chamber to it in May. Winning over their African counterparts will be harder, but de Klerk got 20 to 25 percent of the black vote in recent polls (before Inkatha-gate, however).

The neo-liberal approach also offers patronage for building mass NP support, particularly in the rural areas and mushrooming urban squatter camps. Distributing such perks as land, housing, jobs, school places, etc., via chiefs or bosses would offer material backing to the ideological appeals of pro-NP conservatives and allied ethnic parties—like the Zulu-based Inkatha Party. Such patronage politics has been the secret of electoral success for the right elsewhere in Africa and

*Continued on page 22*



Economic and political changes in South Africa are encouraging realignment along the color line.



# EDITORIAL



## What Soviet citizens want their new society to look like

Very little can now be said with confidence about the plans of the new Soviet government. Neither the political organization of the country, nor the organization of the economy have been decided. No programs have been proposed, and none are likely to be formulated, much less acted on, in the immediate future. But among Soviet citizens who have been active in recent events, there does seem to be general expectation that decisions on the form of government and the nature of the economy should be arrived at democratically.

Assuming this to be so, Soviet citizens' ideas about how the economy should operate may be the best guide to its future. And a massive survey of citizens' opinions, done by the Times-Mirror Center for the People and the Press in May, provides the best information. As we noted last week, in Russia and the Ukraine, some 65 percent of the citizens who had an opinion preferred either "a more democratic type of socialism," or "a modified form of capitalism such as found in Sweden." (Democratic socialism won out over Swedish capitalism by about a 5-4 margin.)

But the survey did not stop there. It went on to ask Soviet citizens about whether various industries and activities should be "mainly run by the state or a cooperative, or mainly run privately."

Asked about farming, restaurants, shops and the manufacture of consumer goods, a minority—ranging from 6 percent to 25 per-

cent—said such institutions should be state owned. Asked about electricity, heavy industry, the phone system, trains and buses, radio and television, banks and schools, a majority—ranging down from 88 percent for electricity to 51 percent for schools—said they should be state owned.

Most surprisingly, a very high percentage of those questioned volunteered opinions not specifically asked for by the surveyors. This rarely happens on U.S. polls, which frequently manipulate public opinion by framing questions so as to elicit a desired response from a public unaccustomed to thinking about social policy. These unsolicited responses indicate that the Soviet people have thought seriously about the future of their society, and that they have confidence in their own opinions.

Thus, 46 percent of the Russians polled volunteered that newspapers should be owned both by the state and privately. (Forty-one percent said newspapers should be state-owned against 10 percent for private ownership). And 42 percent volunteered that health care should be a combination of state and private ownership (with 47 percent for state and 10 percent for private). Similarly, 38 percent wanted schools to be a mix of public and private. Thirty-six percent favored a public-private mix for radio and television, as did 35 percent for restaurants, and 32 percent for banks.

The survey seems to show two things that contradict the impressions about developments in the Soviet Union cultivated by our political leaders and the commercial media. First, that Soviet citizens seem to have a much better idea of the kind of social organization they want than we have been led to believe. Second, that whatever emerges in the new Soviet state, assuming that it reflects the will of the people, it will not look much like capitalism as Americans know it.

## Harkin's entry into presidential race opens the door to real politics

Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA) announced his candidacy for president on Sunday. Several days earlier, Harkin proposed that Congress abrogate last year's budget agreement so that money now earmarked for the military could be allocated to medical research, immunization, Head Start and other domestic needs. We hope this will become a central theme of his campaign.

*In These Times* opposed the budget agreement when it was adopted because it protected military spending for three years by segregating it from domestic spending. Under the agreement, money cannot be transferred from the military—which is grossly overfunded—to social needs—which are grossly underfunded. This budget plan has not only squeezed federal social programs, but has

worsened the crises of states and cities by cutting their allocations of federal funds.

For several years we have lamented the absence of Democratic leaders willing to challenge the budget straightjacket that was imposed by leaders of both parties. And we have said that the Democrats could win only by challenging the assumptions on which the budget is based. Tom Harkin appears to be doing this—and he appears to have some support from other Democratic leaders. Harkin's proposal was made a day after Sen. Paul Simon (D-IL) asked President Bush to reopen budget negotiations in the light of the failed Soviet coup. Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-ME) said last week that it is "time to adjust our defense budgets to the new realities of Soviet-American relations." And in a similar vein, New York Gov. Mario Cuomo praised both Simon and Harkin, and endorsed a proposal by House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt (D-MO) to pay for Soviet humanitarian aid by taking money from the military side of the budget.

With Harkin's entry into the presidential race, Americans may at last see a revival of two-party politics in our country. And we may have a Democrat capable of winning in 1992.

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# LETTERS

## Freefall

AS A LOYAL IN THESE TIMES READER, I ENJOY John Judis' freefall descent into neo-conservatism as much as the next guy, but I wish Judis would stick to being wrong about things he understands. I assumed Professor Tushnet had long ago stunned Judis into silence by exposing his errors about the meaning of the Civil Rights Act of 1990, but Judis is back and more craven and disoriented than ever with his article "In playing politics, Bush ignores minorities' plight" (ITT, Aug. 21). This time Judis laces his legal confusion with obsequious solemnities wishing that President Bush would come home to his "upper-class tradition of public service and *noblesse oblige*" and decide to support the Danforth substitute. But it is clearly Bush, and not Judis, who comprehends the real meaning of this "upper-class tradition": an illusory commitment to "kinder and gentler" government, a passionate commitment to keeping black people and working people in their place.

I counted seven significant factual errors in Judis' piece, but I will mention only three, beginning with the second sentence. There, Judis recycles the White House fantasy that Democratic Party "leaders, prodded by the Washington civil-rights lobby, have fought doggedly for a measure that does, in fact, encourage racial, as well as sexual, quotas." Section 211 of the Civil Rights Act of 1990 specifically included the following language, added at the request of the White House itself: "Nothing in the amendments made by this Act shall be construed to require or encourage an employer to adopt hiring quotas on the basis of race, color, religion, sex or national origin...." The current bill is even stronger, making it a violation of the act to hire by quota. I know why George Bush and David Duke do it, but why does John Judis persist in calling the Democratic legislation a quota bill?

Judis also says that a prohibition against racial harassment on the job is "a guarantee not included in the Civil Rights Act of 1964." But it is. Then he says that the Democratic legislation would "allow all victims of discrimination to sue for money damages." Wrong again. Only victims of intentional discrimination would be able to sue for money damages.

This runaway train of error and falsehood carries Judis off to sentimental reflections about courageous Sen. Danforth and his "upper-class tradition of public service and *noblesse oblige*." Some of us may have thought Theodore Roosevelt and Nelson Rockefeller, to take two of Judis' more bizarre examples, sought state power in order to advance the domestic and global interests of specific classes and groups in American society. But from Judis we learn that, under the honorable tradition of *noblesse oblige*, "members of the upper class are obliged to provide leadership for the society and to look out for the welfare of the less fortunate." (So that's what Nelson Rockefeller was doing at Attica.)

Judis saves his melancholy best for last, concluding remarkably that "in stirring racial unrest to serve his own narrow ends, Bush is betraying both his upper-class background and the party of Lincoln." On the contrary, in stirring racial unrest to serve

his own narrow ends, Bush is fulfilling the expectations of both his social class, which supports civil rights only when it is expedient to do so, and the Republican Party, which has exploited racism at least since Richard Nixon played the "race card" to win the South in the 1968 election. Indeed, why would Judis expect anything more from Bush, who opposed not only the Civil Rights Act of 1990 but the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which he described as a threat to the American system of rights? What was Bush doing while the Reagan-Bush administration tried to give tax breaks to segregated private schools? And does the name Willie Horton ring a bell?

America needs a resurgence of faith in democratic populism, not political fantasies about ruling-class *noblesse oblige*. Judis writes, "Almost everything wrong with American politics today can be found in the debate over the civil rights bill." True. And almost everything wrong with the debate over the civil rights bill can be found in Judis' column.

Jamin B. Raskin  
Assistant Professor of Law  
The American University

**John Judis replies:** I should say that I am grateful that anyone read my story about the civil rights bill, but I am getting tired of professors holding me up to a bar of political correctness. In the last six months, I've evidently fallen from "neoliberal Jew" to "neoconservative." I also heartily dislike junior professors touting their credentials to imply that what are ongoing disputes over interpretation are, in fact, "significant factual errors."

As for what the professor claims to be errors: The Democrats did indeed put language in their bill saying that it was not a quota bill, but the actual provisions still could induce an employer to resort to quotas in order to avoid litigation. As I explained in my article, the crucial provision concerned whether litigants had to demonstrate that discrimination was being caused by specific practices. The Democrats left a loophole—if a plaintiff, after "diligent effort," could not discover the specific practices, he or she could cite overall practices. This would open the door to claims that statistical disparities demonstrate discrimination, and could pressure employers to remove those disparities in order to avoid suits. Danforth in his compromise removed exactly this loophole in order to shut the door on any claim that the bill would encourage quotas. As a result, the Bush administration was forced to bring in other irrelevant concerns to justify a veto threat.

The Democrats' bill did not seek to read a prohibition against racial harassment on the job into the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Rather it sought to reverse a Supreme Court ruling in

Patterson vs. McLean Credit Union that a century-old section of the U.S. Code prohibited racial harassment in hiring decisions, but not on the job harassment.

As I wrote in my article, the upper-class tradition of noblesse oblige has played a very important role in 20th-century liberalism. Of course, some of those schooled in this tradition have performed invidious acts; so have the exemplars of Democratic populism. But to understand the debate between Danforth and Bush or between Sen. Bill Bradley and Bush, you have to understand that Danforth and Bradley are accusing Bush of betraying this tradition.

## Self-serving works

IN HIS ARTICLE ON THOMAS' NOMINATION TO THE U.S. Supreme Court (ITT, Aug. 7), Salim Muwakkil seems to lose track of the element of cause and effect in the self-help/civil rights dichotomy. Grievous structural injustices in our economic system—not just the residual effects of slavery and discrimination—necessitate governmental measures to equalize opportunities and assist the needy. But when, as has been the case for many in the past, such measures merely represent access to jobs that pay seriously inadequate wages, nothing has changed.

In America, the Protestant ethic—which appears to support wanton materialism—permeates all institutions in our society. Rather than the quest for a just society, this ethic dictates self-serving "good works" by those who, often through their own selfish machinations or the accident of fate, control inordinate quantities of wealth. Therefore, one hears little acknowledgement of the relationship between the exorbitant wealth of some and the dire need of others.

Self-help and structural change through governmental action are both crucial. It behooves those who continue to seek a future democratic America—or to acknowledge the egregious inadequacies of the present system—to remain clear about the underlying realities of the self-help/civil rights dialectic.

Margaret Begg  
Alexandria, Va.

## The AIDS smokescreen

I DON'T THINK I HAVE EVER NOTED A MORE REMARKABLE microcosm of the decade of AIDS than your recent article by Tim Vanderpool (ITT, Aug. 7) that described the campaign by two Tohono O'odham Indian women on the Sells reservation in Arizona. Their project title, translated as "AIDS is killing O'odham," is so bizarre it can be labeled as an oxymoron.

AIDS, as an epidemic, is already showing

demographic signs of having peaked, and, as predicted by many these past several years, may go down as yet another hoax perpetrated by the establishment and the Reagan/Bush administration as a coverup of the most shameful decade in American history—perhaps not conceived by them, but certainly used to their advantage.

In 1983, for example, with barely 1,500 cases of the HIV disease known of and reported, but before any knowledge of its etiology or virology, Reagan and his spokespeople declared AIDS as (sic) the most pressing health problem in America! This while almost a million and a half Americans were dying annually from heart disease and cancers, while abortion rights were being scuttled, while workplace safety programs were eliminated and thus resulted in as many unnecessary on-the-job accident deaths as AIDS, while school lunch programs were cut, while an increase in the minimum wage was denied for the first time in history, and while an already abysmal health-care plan—Medicaid and Medicare—was being further sabotaged. And those are for openers!

The list goes on and on. Measles—yes, plain, ordinary measles—killed as many babies last year in the U.S. as did AIDS, and only because Congress refused the \$9 million allocation necessary for full immunization. Yet, they added \$600 million to the \$1.2 billion already spent on AIDS, second in funding only to cancer and more than cardiac disease, which kills at a rate 60 times greater. And, just like AIDS, just about all of these conditions and causes of death are higher among the black and poor for reasons that do not need an explanation here.

The most remarkable statement by Vanderpool was, "To date, no O'odham have tested positive for HIV." Putting that next to the project's title makes one wonder if our senses are lost.

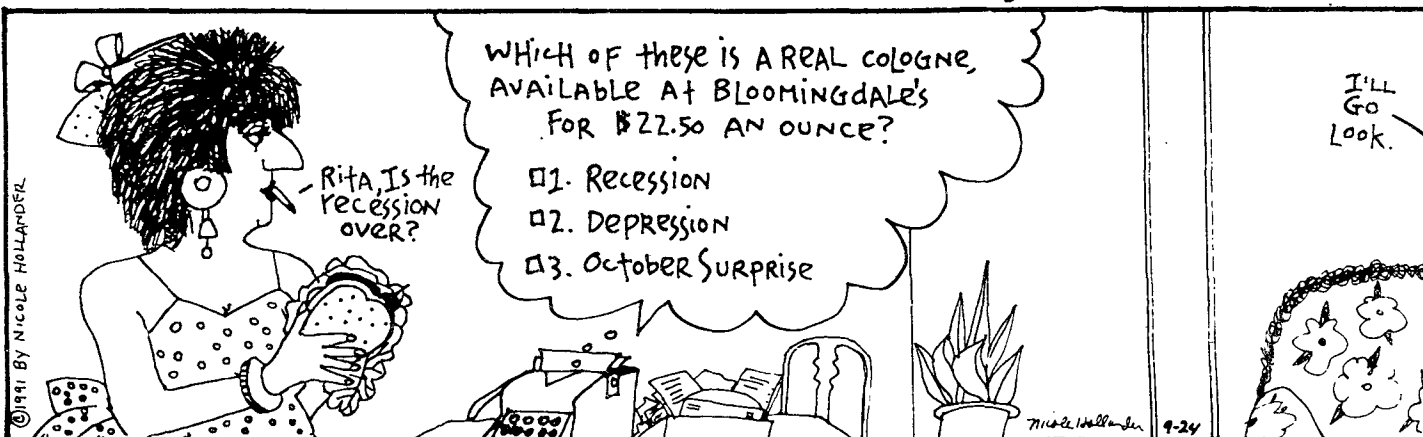
AIDS is not the common cold. It is a killer when it strikes. But it is not the green glob of sci-fi. It is containable, as the signs are showing, or starting to. It has been the education programs that have done the job, especially among the gay community. I protest against those who are turning our attention away from the real epidemics of inaction that serves our political enemies well.

Don Sloan, M.D.  
New York

**Editor's note:** Please try to keep letters under 250 words in length. Otherwise we may have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you want to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letters—or at least write clearly and with wide margins.

## SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



IN THESE TIMES SEPT. 18-24, 1991 15



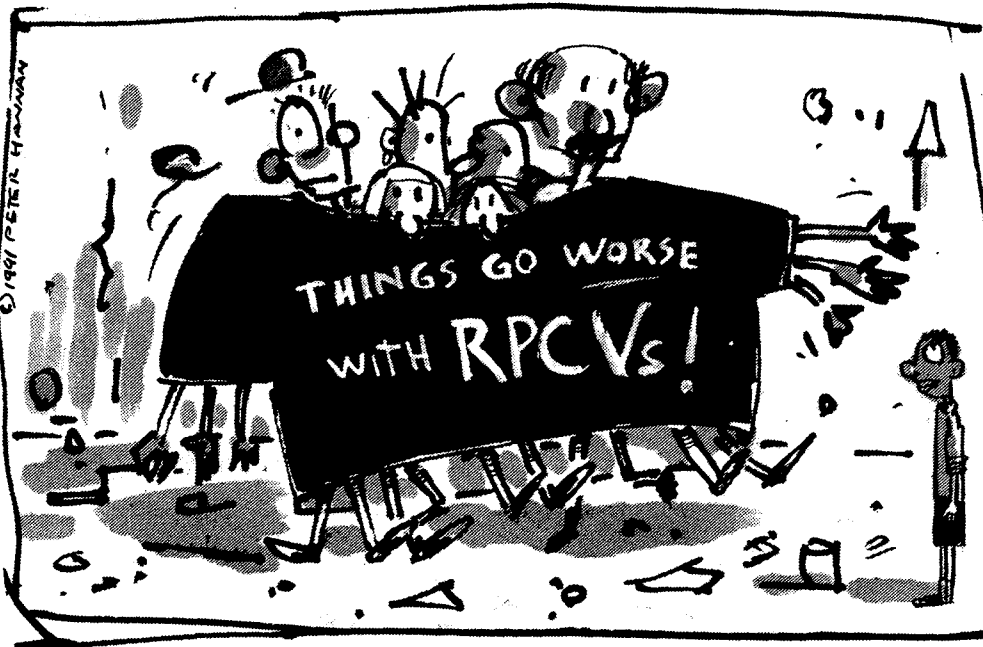
# VIEWPOINT

By John J. Kulczycki

**T**HE 30TH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE OF the Peace Corps in Washington, D.C., August 1-4 featured speeches by Sargent Shriver and every other politician and former politician with a connection to the Peace Corps. But in the big tent on the Mall in Washington's heat and humidity, the buzz of conversation among former volunteers who had not seen each other since they served together in Africa, Asia or Latin America a decade ago or more often drowned out the lesser-known speakers.

Under the theme of "Continuing to Serve," the conference also treated us Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) to a "Volunteer Day" of so-called "Service to the Community." The typical RPCV is a generous, adventurous, out-going person. For someone who served for two years in a Third World country and values that experience enough to attend the 30th anniversary conference, the idea of reliving it by serving the needs of our society for a day has an innate appeal. Besides, we'd be working side-by-side with other RPCVs, just as years ago. Who could resist such a nostalgic trip? Thus, it came about that I and others who were PCVs in Ethiopia in the '60s came to be numbered among George Bush's Thousand Points of Light for a day in the Third World of our nation's capital.

After a pep talk from the director of the Thousand Points of Light Foundation, we went off to our project sites dressed in our uniform T-shirts donated by the Coca-Cola



## Points of light look dim to a Peace Corps veteran

Company, which made sure that an injunction to enjoy its "classic" drink was the most prominent message printed on the shirts. We were going not only to meet the needs of the community with volunteerism but also to support the free enterprise system by advertising the product of one of America's most famous corporations!

Since the dozen or so RPCVs whom I was

with had served mainly in Ethiopia, we were, of course, assigned to a project in the African-American community. (I wonder where the RPCVs from Asia spent the day.) This had a certain logic to it. After all, in two years in Ethiopia we learned how to relate to the "natives." But in the end, we had little contact with the "natives" of Washington's black ghetto: our assignment was to replace the tile in the recreation room of a home for the elderly poor.

In some ways, it was a return to our days

into the basement to do our "service" and had no contact with them for the rest of the day. The home was also little more prepared for us than the Third World countries we served in: someone had to go out to buy scrapers as we began to rip up the warped and broken tiles by hand.

Nor were we any better prepared for this job than when we joined the Peace Corps as mostly young, recent graduates of liberal arts colleges. This time, for all our Ph.D.s, foreign experience, fluency in a variety of languages and years of teaching, no one had any expertise in laying tile. After we spent half the day learning by doing, a young African-American who worked elsewhere in the building came by and proceeded to tell us what we were doing wrong and show us how it should be done. In a matter of minutes he did more than we had achieved in hours. Even so, we had to leave before the job was done, with the glue that oozed out between the tiles sticking to the soles of our shoes and on our hands and clothes, to say nothing of the sore backs and aching muscles of people no longer as young as when they were PCVs. It is not easy to be a Point of Light.

We PCVs of the '60s responded to John Kennedy's clarion call that we ask what we can do for our country. We were attracted by the adventure, but we also had the idealism of going out to help the poor of the Third World by introducing them to the American way of doing things. Once in the field, most of us sooner or later saw the arrogance of it all. We learned far more than we taught and gained far more than we gave.

Volunteerism offers the satisfaction of giving, but only if one really makes a contribution, or accepts the illusion of having done so. As a specialist in Eastern Europe, our tile-laying project reminded me less of my Peace Corps experience than of the projects Communists used to pressure students and workers into doing on weekends as proof of their "socialist consciousness." Volunteerism is not a panacea for the ills of our society. Sometimes there is no substitute for paying people for what needs to be done: the unemployed should be hired to lay tile at the homes for the elderly poor in our nation's capital, and new taxes on incomes over \$100,000 should pay for it. ■

**John J. Kulczycki**, who was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ethiopia 1963-65, teaches East European history at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

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as PCVs in Ethiopia. The mostly African-American residents of the home knew of our coming and greeted us with smiles and hellos as we arrived, but then we descended

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## A capital history of the left's retreat

"Think globally, retreat locally," is a joke slogan I've heard quite a bit up and down the West Coast these past few weeks. It's a line that nicely captures the somewhat ironic pessimism that has seized many radicals three years into the Bush administration, 11 years into the Reagan-Bush era and nearly a quarter of a century from the moment the radical wave peaked in the late '60s.

As that wave began to recede in the '70s and the anti-war movement all too hastily rolled up their maps of Indo-China, "act locally" was the residue. As the right-wing, corporate counter-attack gathered momentum in the middle '70s, the horizons of the left began to shrink to the frontiers of municipalities, county boards of education, city councils and urban water districts.

Radicals began to honeycomb local regulatory and oversight bodies. Sometimes they became indistinguishable from the overseers they replaced, sometimes they remained principled, often indispensable in curbing local police forces, restraining local developers, harassing the Haves in the interests of the Have Nots. But the horizons shrank all the same. Even the broad levels of opposition to the contra war in Nicaragua were most rigorously expressed in movements like Neighbor to Neighbor (a movement started in North Carolina) or in hundreds of Sister City projects.

The momentum in national organizing passed to various segments of the women's movement, to human rights and good citizen bodies like Amnesty International or Common Cause, to environmental organizations like Greenpeace and to consumer movements like those inspired by Ralph Nader, now being drafted for president by a committee taking out advertisements across the country. (I hope he runs.)

Among the younger cohorts of the American left this has led to a narrowing of political and historical focus. At a meeting of mostly Californian local organizers not long ago, I was asked to link local activity with a larger, international left agenda. This being the week during which Lenin statues were being hauled off to the knacker's yard, I said that people should not entirely discount the achievements of "real existing socialism." By way of illustration I pointed out that when the Chinese Communists came to power in 1949 the average life expectancy in China was around 40 years, and as of 1988 was around 70.

A young woman replied that she couldn't see the point of these probably questionable statistics about life expectancy in China nor understand "what help they would be in my organizing." (This remark, I should point out, was made in Los Angeles, where first-year infant mortality statistics have been rising among blacks and Hispanics throughout the Reagan-Bush years, and where such figures have instant meaning among poor people, notably blacks, whose life expectancies trail by several years their white counterparts.)

But this laconic indifference to Chinese mortality figures coexists with a very practical internationalism. Left organizers up and down California and indeed across the United States deal with the consequences of the international division of labor every day of their lives, whether it be a runaway shop moving from \$6-an-hour work in El Norte to \$6-a-day jobs in *maquiladoras* on the Mexican border, or in the form of a

Guatemalan family fleeing the death squads because someone had fingered a family member as a labor organizer.

It's a matter of connecting up energetic local militancy with a sense of left history and national and international left perspective. I remember Studs Terkel once telling me about the lack of a sense of history among some young folk he'd been talking to. The subject had been the working day. "The working day you folks take for granted, a century ago people were giving their lives for that," he'd growled at unknowing youth.

After the funeral orations for communism, we need a new, optimistic vision for the left, not just for the future but for our past. Arguments can be made for a view of this century as having been one of enormous advance for the program of the left: democratic and human rights, the social safety net, wages and conditions of work, education, health care, the rights of women and of ethnic and other minorities, the defeat of fascism and the end of colonialism... all these have been gains fought for and won by the left. Is the defeat of Soviet-style Communism not more than a mere blip in these bigger trends?

The undoubted victories listed above were mostly extorted from capital in the teeth of the latter's vehement opposition, but in the end they were also victories for rational capitalists. In other words the function of the left has often been to save capital from itself and its inherently base tendencies. A better educated work force was a more efficient work force; the admission of women into the work force meant a widening and cheapening of the labor pool; a better paid work force was one that could buy more commodities. Whose cause was being advanced? The spreading of a social safety net meant a measure of security for workers, but also the subsidizing of capitalists' low wages by government. By the middle '50s the white North American working class had won enormous gains, in terms of housing, education, work time, pensions, union representation and political clout. But productivity agreements of the late '40s and '50s came at the expense of input by labor into decision-making or workplace democracy. The tremendous victories of the civil rights movement must similarly be set within a perspective of capitalist rationality. On the one hand there was the fact of black people being able to go to the polls without being murdered; on the other, their entry into the industrial work force again meant a widening of the labor pool and a cheapening of the cost of labor. Whose was the victory?

Time and again there has been a fork in the road. One path has led down to barbarism in the form of fascism, the rule of capital without let or hindrance, ferocious colonial exploitation; the other path led up toward the mitigation of injustice, inequality and oppression. Time and again labor has forced capital toward that second path and then heard capital slap itself on the back for having adopted the course of virtue.

By the late '60s it looked as though the momentum of labor and of progressive ideas against capital was solidly in the ascendant. Vietnamese resistance overseas went hand in hand with apparent ideological weakness on the part of capital at home. One or other of the newsweeklies ran a cover at that time on William Buckley, "the

## ASHES & DIAMONDS

By Alexander Cockburn

last conservative?" But within five years capital was staking out a new road to the lower depths, and—amid a crisis in profitability—a violent assault on the gains of the postwar period.

Capital in this renewed guise was infinitely more sophisticated than in its earlier assaults. Since 1973, real wages in the U.S. have been going down; the working day has been steadily lengthening; social safety nets have been torn; inner city funding eroded; public education hollowed out by attrition in federal and state funding. The conditions of production have grown steadily more wretched, as capital's regulators nullify workplace standards. Above all, the cost of labor has been reduced as capital has whipsawed one sector against another, reducing the entire labor force toward a mobile, part-time, non-unionized entity. To take one index: job classifications in one GM-Japanese auto plant have sunk from 16 to 3.

This has been paralleled by a far greater flexibility and versatility of capital in its international motions than in previous epochs, even as extraction from the Third World continues at a delirious pace, with Africa and Latin America exporting capital to the First World, while living standards in those continents plunge downward.

At this fork in the road the path downward is being worn into a superhighway. The left is entirely on the defensive, either split into discrete interest groups or defending minimal liberal programs that 25 years ago it was deriding as the bookends of

Keynesian capitalism. A left movement has to offer more than this: it has to think on a local but also on a national and global scale. On the national level the left has to argue a case it has virtually let go by default for twenty years: the social control of investment, the "socialization" of the market, in which democratic investment planning represents the popular will, as against the corporate drive for profitability.

As James O'Connor, editor of *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*, recently remarked, "global capitalist development since World War II would have been impossible without deforestation, air and water pollution, pollution of the atmosphere... and the other ecological disasters... If global capital had bothered to reproduce or restore the conditions of production as these presented themselves at the end of the post-World War II reconstruction period, world GNP rates probably would have been only a fraction of recorded rates."

Further defining eco-socialism O'Connor says, "At the level of interests, all social movements, insofar as we regard them as fighting for something material (including the materiality of the body), implicitly raise the same demand, or 'secretly' have the same political goal—to make the state more responsive... The point is to put democratic content into the democratic forms or democratic procedures of the bourgeois liberal state... Nor is the point to reform liberal democracy, to make it work better, because reform in this sense means merely to make democratic procedures or forms work better in their own terms, without attacking the undemocratic or laissez-faire content of the liberal state... I add quickly that by 'state' I also mean international state bodies such as the IMF."

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Citadel Underground...Challenging Consensus Reality Since 1990



**Political Protest and Cultural Revolution: Nonviolent Direct Action in the 1970s and 1980s**  
By Barbara Epstein  
University of California Press  
327 pp., \$24.95

By Peter Siskind

**W**HEN DAWN BROKE ON MAY Day, 1977, 2,400 protesters illegally occupying the proposed site of the Seabrook nuclear-energy plant rose to find the National Guard encircling their makeshift camp. Orders were issued: anyone not off the plant's grounds in 20 minutes would be arrested. A long environmental movement's rapid growth was confirmed that morning when more than 1,400 people chose jail rather than evacuate. It had been less than a year since a group of 18 had staged the first direct action opposing the plant's construction in the New Hampshire coastal town. The publicity from the group's May Day protest eventually brought the Clamshell Alliance throngs of new adherents to its strategy of nonviolent direct action.

But success changed the equation. Never again would the Seabrook gates be conveniently left open. Next time, the only way to occupy the site would be for protesters to admit themselves forcibly by cutting fence wire and confronting awaiting police. According to many Clamshell members, though, such tactics contradicted the values of nonviolence, which, along with other principles such as decision-making by consensus, had emerged as vital priorities for the Alliance since its inception. The alternatives for the next protest were clear: take the efficacious political action and forcibly occupy the site or stick to a valued set of principles and seek another, as yet unknown, means of protest.

**The Movement and The Stasis:** How this episode resolves itself is one of several telling moments that Barbara Epstein recalls in *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution*, her history of the American nonviolent direct action movement in the '70s and '80s. Epstein illuminates the movement's character and describes the strategies and philosophy that alternately put it at odds with establishment interests and would-be political allies. For the Clamshell, this meant a majority of members opposed fence-cutting while a vocal minority supporting such action stood ready to block any group consensus.

Months of indecision and political inactivity followed until the state attorney general publicly offered a solution. He proposed that the group hold a demonstration on the site, but only on a prearranged date and with the guarantee that all protesters leave the site at a designated time. Many Clamshell members on both

## Politics: pro and consensus

sides of the nonviolence debate thought this offer unacceptable, but a self-appointed set of leaders who approved the plan forced their view upon the rest of the group.

A stunning 20,000 people attended the demonstration in June 1978, but the local movement was crumbling. Each of the factions was disillusioned. Pro-fence cutters were so disgusted by the concession to government that they split to form a new, short-lived group. And non-violence advocates' anger at unelected leaders' effective abridgment of the consensus decision-making process moved many more to drop out of the Clamshell. The strategy of direct site occupation proved incapable of stopping construction plans. With its momentum gone, the Clamshell soon died and the Seabrook plant was built.

**Participatory glories:** The principal characters in *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution* are those in the Clamshell and similar groups who, as the book's title suggests, emphasize cultural change—revolution is perhaps too ambitious a word—as the primary means to political restructuring. For these individuals, a traditional political goal such as stopping a nuclear plant's construction is secondary to the collective process—to maintaining the egalitarian and democratic community values that have developed within the group.

This concern is manifested in an internal structure developed to ensure individual participation: every member of an organization like the Clamshell belongs to an affinity

group with about a dozen other members. Each affinity group reaches consensus decisions on issues concerning direct action tactics and broader strategy and sends a spokesperson, appointed on a rotating basis, to the "spokescouncil" to convey this decision. Composed of all the affinity group spokespersons,

**ORGANIZING** the spokescouncil operates in a manner similar to its related association: consensus must be reached on all decisions; any individual can block the judgment of the rest of the representatives.

*Political Protest and Cultural Revolution's* best anecdotal passages tell of the benefits of such participatory politics. Recalling the sense of community fostered by the affinity group system, some describe their experiences in the direct action movement as no less than "magical" and "utopian." A support camp set up to assist more than 2,000 Abalone Alliance protesters in their two-week blockade of the Diablo nuclear plant in California in 1981 drew starry-eyed praise from even experienced organizers.

Recalling the camp's town meet-

**Movement, stasis and the contradictions of consensus democracy.**

ings and community kitchen, one participant said, "It took enormous organizing and fundraising to create that city, but when you got there it seemed so easy, a self-supporting, mutualistic community. ... I felt, this is a way I could live." So strong was the sense of community among the blockaders that its infectious spirit spread beyond the boundaries of the camp: a nurse at the local hospital secretly offered free medical supplies to a bleeding protester; an overworked policeman, exhausted from 36 hours of constant duty, smiled compassionately, expressing respect for his handcuffed prisoner's commitment and nonviolence.

**Swallowing dissent:** Clearly Epstein is sympathetic to those who place culture before politics, but she isn't uncritical of them either. The great paradox of the direct action movement is that its utopian attempt to conflate process and goal generates as many problems as it overcomes. The affinity group structure exists to give each person a meaningful part in the decisions of the whole. But as the Clamshell's demise shows, in a pinch, democracy sometimes takes a back seat to the ambitions of self-appointed leaders.

In this situation and others, a tremendous pressure weighs down on dissenting individuals to conform to the group's views. One veteran organizer describes this as the "politics of niceness":

"It was difficult, under these conditions, to have a simple principled argument. People who argued strongly would be condemned for not being nice, not for whether their ar-

gument was right or wrong." In any thing but a small and homogenous group, the difficult task of reaching consensus threatens to breed a deep strain of anti-intellectualism.

Direct action groups' emphasis on community over political effectiveness also belies a tension within the idyll. The benefits of a harmonious community are undeniable, but tangible political issues are what originally draw people together. Thus direct action groups deflect attention from the concerns to which they owe their existence and prospective future.

Such a destabilizing contradiction plays itself out in the story of the Livermore Action Group (LAG). LAG developed a strong sense of community in the course of several well-attended acts of civil disobedience against a local nuclear research facility associated with the University of California. But the protest, not-surprising failure to achieve the ultimate goal of closing the facility left several members, including Epstein herself, wanting to expand the organization's tactics to include education of and outreach to local residents as well as legal demonstrations with other like-minded groups. The majority of LAG members believed that civil disobedience was the only valid vehicle for protest, the ineffectiveness of more conventional means being the movement's inspiration in the first place. This majority blocked the proposal to diversify strategy; but left with only one, incomplete political tactic, LAG (community and all) soon languished and dissolved.

**Participant historian:** It is hard to determine exactly what legacy Epstein sees the nonviolent direct action movement leaving behind. The illuminating insights of *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution* often emerge at unpredictable and ineffectual moments. Rather than informing the whole book and lending cohesion to her work, much of Epstein's best analysis seems patched into the text, damaging the impact of her ideas and the drama of her narrative. One moment she'll offer a glowing, romantic portrait of a direct action group's collective mission, and then go on at length to describe the same group's fundamental flaws and deficiencies.

To account for such contradictions, a glimpse of Epstein's outlook is found in the frequent portrayal of herself as a participant in the direct action movement as well as its historian. The photograph on the back cover shows Epstein smiling proudly as policemen escort her away, under arrest, from a demonstration in San Francisco. From this perspective, it seems that salvaging the movement from the long list of compelling stories that have been forgotten and neglected is at least as important to her as recording an authoritative history.

A more sophisticated account than Epstein's would have to come to terms with a variety of questions upon which *Political Protest and Cul-*



ural Revolution only briefly touches. How, for instance, can the direct action movement exist as one part of a larger progressive force, as Epstein suggests it should, when it systematically rejects all political strategies other than civil disobedience? Can the direct action movement's overwhelmingly upper-middle-class, well-educated members possibly make alliances with a heterogeneous, divided working class? And why should we suppose that the tactic of non-violent direct action can incite more fundamental political transformations than the limited liberal reforms it has achieved in the past?

In the humbler context, though, of recasting the movement's history to save it from marginalization, *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution* serves its purpose well. Besides democratic and nonviolent priorities, the direct action movement retained other characteristics such as equal gender representation and acceptance of feminist ideas that make it exceptional within the ranks of protest movements. Women weren't only participants in civil disobedience, their collective perspective contributed significantly to the philosophic underpinnings of the movement. And philosophy aside, an

important portion of the protests that made up the direct action movement were conducted by all-women groups. Some of the largest of these included the Women's Pentagon Actions in 1980 and 1981 and the Seneca Women's Peace Camp in 1983.

Ultimately, neither these women's protests nor any other direct action groups Epstein describes accomplished their respective political goals of stopping the arms race or a specific nuclear plant. Popular movements come into existence when a group of people rise up against specific conditions affecting

their daily lives. And though it makes them no less important, the nature of nuclear and arms-race issues tends to isolate them from the everyday concerns of people's lives. Deprived of a natural constituency and burdened by the monumental scale of their goals, movements developed around these issues have an inherently tough road.

The gains of the nonviolent direct action movement may be insufficient, but they should be judged by what was possible. Since it is not at all clear that a different strategy could have achieved the goals more effectively—in Seabrook, for exam-

ple, the fence-cutters' attempt to start their own group had much less impact than the nonviolent Clamshell—it is best to view the movement, despite its flaws, in the context of its accomplishments: the attention drawn to the issues, the consciousness raised. Similarly, Barbara Epstein's *Political Protest and Cultural Revolution* has drawn valuable attention to the direct action movement and, despite flaws, deserves praise for the extent of its accomplishment. ■

Peter Siskind is a freelance writer based at *The Nation* magazine in New York City.

### The Moral Framework of Public Life: Gender, Politics and the State in Rural New York, 1870-1930

By Paula Baker  
Oxford University Press  
280 pp., \$29.95

By David Futrelle

## Manly passion and womanly power in the heart of the country

THIS IS A SMALL BOOK WITH large ambitions. Though Paula Baker's ostensible subject is rural politics in upstate New York, her larger purpose is, as she explains modestly, to "see how introducing gender to the study of politics might change the way we see public life." Baker is only partly successful in her attempt. While she shows up clearly the inadequacy of accounts of politics that ignore gender, her book is not without its own inadequacies.

First the good news. Baker's book not only deals intriguingly with the big issues but also captures in often vivid detail the "messiness" of her particular subjects. At first glance, she would seem to be working with rather unpromising material: the seemingly narrowminded inhabitants of a dreary area in an era of decline, drained of population by industrial development elsewhere. This decline seeped into every aspect of life, encouraging a wary pessimism among the rural New Yorkers.

A speaker at the Schenectady Valley Centennial celebration in 1891, for example, intending to lecture on "100 Years of Progress," spent most of his time lamenting the region's moral decay. Residents looked upon agricultural improvements with suspicion and allowed local organizations to stagnate in endless searches for the elusive goal of "consensus"—one Grange chapter spent several years debating whether their officers should wear ribbons or jewels on their badges. Faced with change, Baker's subjects lowered their expectations and dug in their heels; only in the 1920s did such suspicion give way in part to an acceptance of modernity. This part of the book may provide a useful tonic for those on the left who have made "community" a kind of fetish. It is a striking portrait of a claustrophobic world.

**Conceptual shift:** Baker nevertheless treats her subjects with dignity; the book is by no means a screed against the "idiocy of rural

life." She takes seriously the rhetoric, activities and rituals of rural political life, describing in rich detail the gendered language that permeated (and defined) both the public and private spheres. In the process, she reveals that her seemingly backward subjects were in fact centrally involved in one of the most significant political and conceptual shifts in American history.

For men in the 19th century, Baker argues, politics served as more than a simple means of negotiating competing claims within the framework of a growing capitalist state. Political life presented an idealized vision of manhood. The best of the political leaders "embodied ideal masculine traits: loyalty, strength, fortitude, boldness, industry and honesty." In short, they possessed "character."

Political life provided a world within which men could define, develop and test their own "manliness" in the company of other men, a separate sphere in many ways analogous to what Carroll Smith-Rosenberg described as the 19th-century "female world of love and ritual." Political campaigns allowed men to express emotions forbidden them otherwise in public, to develop deep friendships with other men. Men were brought to tears by dramatic events at party conventions, and their letters to politicians expressed in gushing, sentimental language their "ardent" support for party leaders in the fiercely partisan politics of the day.

Women were rigorously excluded from this self-consciously "manly" world. Nevertheless, despite often considerable obstacles, women (especially village women) became involved in their own version of politics, joining local religious and other voluntary organizations, developing limited schemes for charity and relief and campaigning actively for temperance. They thus attempted to bring domestic virtues into the public sphere.

Denied political influence through party work and elections, women improvised new and strikingly modern methods to extend their influ-

ence, lobbying elected officials and developing a kind of single-issue politics. Women activists combined the old and the new in their justifications for women's influence, arguing that women (especially if given the vote) could bring both old-fashioned morality and modern rationality to a political world mired in corrupt, irrational partisanship.

**Women's triumph:** Baker's account is rife with ironies: men, despite their partisan loyalties and considerable political involvement, re-

### HISTORY

mained suspicious of "big government," preferring to keep politics local and to remove troubling issues from politics altogether. Rural women, however, looked increasingly to the state to solve problems. "While most rural men sought to put limits on government," Baker notes, "activist women aimed to have government put limits on citizens' behavior."

The biggest irony of all, and perhaps the central insight of Baker's book, is that it was the women's vision of politics that triumphed in the end—though not in a way that significantly advanced women's interests as they were conventionally defined. By the early 20th century, as the state took on activities previously outside its jurisdiction, expanding greatly the public sphere, the entire "moral framework of public life" was transformed.

The separate spheres, in short, converged. Mainly partisanship eroded, and gendered political language seemed increasingly archaic. "Neither men nor women made requests of public figures by pointing to their own admirable manhood or womanhood," Baker notes. "Women gained the right to participate in what had been an exclusively male ritual, while men adopted the interest-group tactics that activist women had practiced." The ultimate success of the suffragists reflected in part the fact that women's suffrage represented less of a conceptual and social challenge than it had in years past. What had been political—gen-

der—now became personal.

Baker's book, for all its strengths, nevertheless presents an incomplete picture of the transformations she seeks to explain. In bringing the issue of gender to the center of her analysis, she completely neglects the issue of class. A quick glance at the book's index reveals her priorities clearly. One finds 135 references to "gender" and related categories but not a single entry for "class." Looking further in the index, one finds references to subjects Baker presumably considers more important: "death, in rural social thought," "rural free delivery," and even "woodchucks." (The "woodchuck" reference, for the curious, points the reader to the story of a young boy whose bizarre perseverance in smoking out and stabbing a woodchuck led one newspaper columnist (with no intended irony) to praise him as "the kind of boy from which presidents are selected.")

**Class issues:** This is not to say that class has disappeared entirely in Baker's account. Because it is such an inescapable subject, it emerges from time to time in the book—villagers grumble about the "idle" urban rich and, without any sense of contradiction, mutter about disfranchising the propertyless. But Baker makes no attempt to put these outbursts in context; her explanations for such utterances often seem mainly to drain them of meaning.

One angry newspaper editor quoted in the book denounced political leaders for "legislating for themselves" at the same time he attacked millionaires—"those other greedy ones"—for bringing "the common people ... to their ruin." Baker de-

**Women gained the right to participate in an exclusively male ritual, while men adopted the tactics women had practiced.**

scribes this as an example of "cynicism" toward leaders; but it is clearly much more than that. How did rural New Yorkers reconcile such sentiments with their persistent conservatism—or did they? Out of context, the quote is simply a jarring reminder that class does matter, though here we're not sure just how.

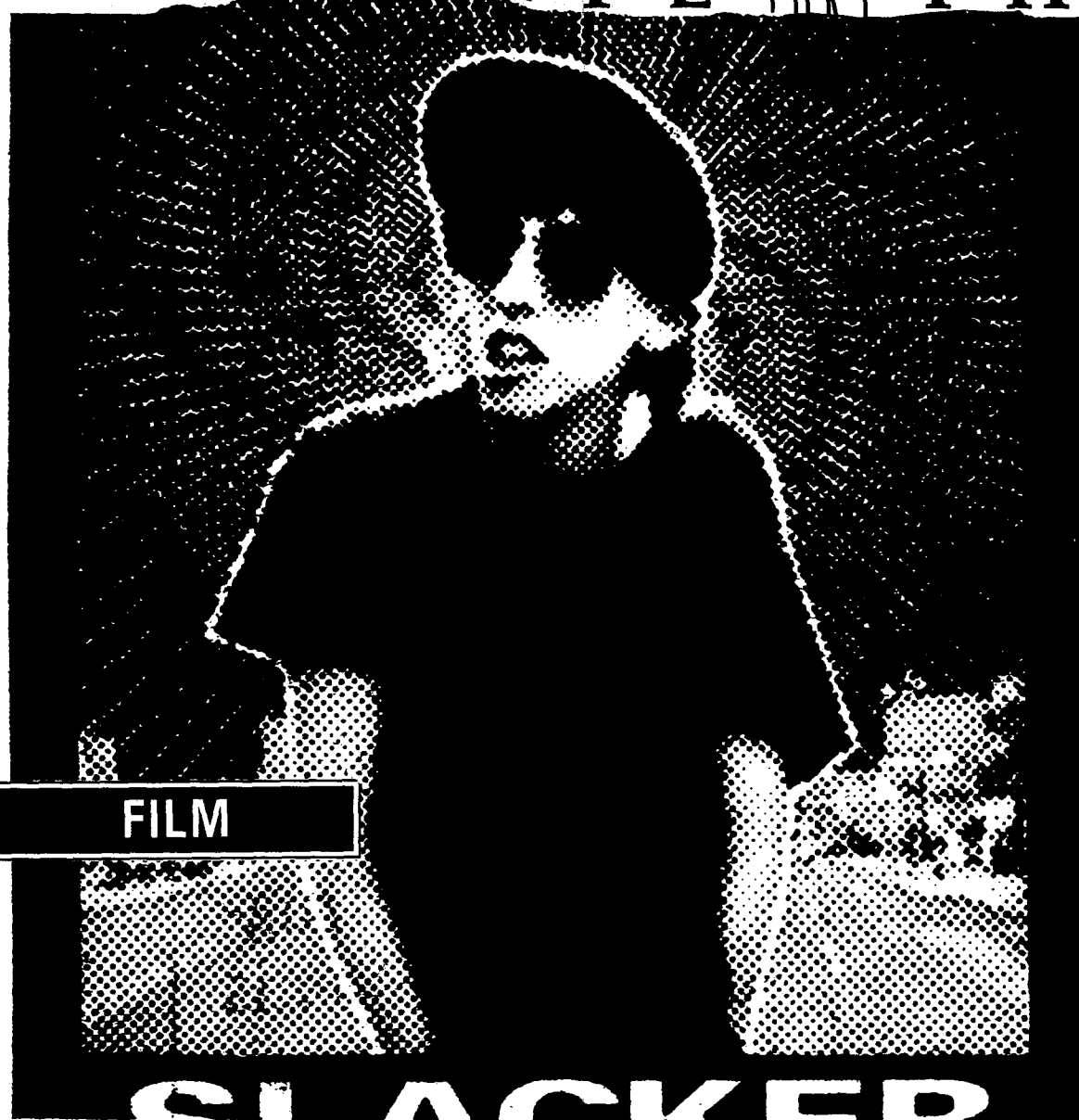
Historians of working-class womanhood, most notably Christine Stansell and Kathy Peiss, have demonstrated how closely the issues of class and gender are interrelated and have made it clear that it is impossible to understand either subject without connecting the two. Baker ignores such insights. Many of the divisions (ideologically and otherwise) between what she describes as women and men in general were in fact divisions within the larger parameters of the white, native-born middle class, and many of the issues they worried over were fundamentally alien to the growing (largely immigrant) working-class, and, of course, to blacks.

Baker recognizes that the activist women she dwells upon were better off than most, but in no way does this realization affect her analysis of their activity. Labor historians in recent years have portrayed temperance campaigns (and other "moral reforms") as a kind of class violence against the poor. If Baker intends her work to directly challenge this analysis, she needs to forthrightly address the issue of class—if only to explain why, in her mind, it matters so much less than gender. Baker, instead, fudges the issue.

This evasion is problematic enough even in explaining the history of an area in which class conflict was relatively muted. As an explanation of the transformation in American politics in general—as a kind of paradigmatic account of the role of gender in the beginnings of the welfare state—Baker's account is more troubling in its omissions. She has, to be sure, written an extremely suggestive book. But unless it is treated critically, by historians sensitive to the issue of class, it could serve as much to derail as to enable future attempts at synthesis. Only works that attempt to understand gender and class together are apt to fully explain either. ■

David Futrelle is a Ph.D. candidate in American history at Northwestern University.





FILM

## Slacker packs offbeat punch but slights the other Austin

By Gregory Stephens

**T**HE AUSTIN, TEXAS, CULT FILM *Slacker* was released nationally late in the summer of '91, giving the rest of America a glimpse of what the *New York Times* calls a "paradise for drop-outs." Director Richard Linklater's deceptively spontaneous cinematic style is further evidence of a growing gallery of independent American filmmakers who are, against the odds, successfully promoting regional cinematic dialects. As a 1982-89 Austin resident, I feel proud that

an Austin resident has "made it" with an original, homegrown vision—but embarrassed that *Slacker* suggests only whites inhabit this subculture.

### Slacker skewers the floating-world lifestyle of college towns.

Linklater's debut feature has drawn generally rave reviews, being compared to *Down by Law* or, in

narrative structure, to Luis Bunuel's *Phantom of Liberty*. But I am struck by its blinkered view that, like Woody Allen's New York, is isolated from its multicultural context. Having lived in the world *Slacker* portrays, I knew the people on screen. But something was missing. Where were the non-white Slackers? I saw no Latinos and, predictably, the only black was a street vendor selling "Black Power" T-shirts and guilt to passing white liberals. How is it that none of the almost 100 characters have non-white friends?

*Slacker* is consistently opposition-

al in its own offbeat, mildly nihilistic way. Professors, students, post-students, musicians and freeloaders in this college town endlessly ruminate on various conspiracy theories with a vaguely pornographic glee. One young woman trying to hustle an alleged Madonna pap smear is impressed by a freeway driver who suddenly snapped and began shooting other drivers. A professor tells a would-be thief in his apartment that the day in 1963 when Charles Whitman began shooting students from the Texas Tower was Austin's finest hour. These Slackers are "aggressive non-participants in a system they don't see much point in," says Linklater. They wear their non-participation like a badge. "I may not live well, but at least I don't have to work to do it," says one low-life.

**One trick pony:** The Austin of *Slacker* is at once endearing and maddeningly insular. Most everyone seems to be either a member of the garage rock band Glass Eye or an affiliate of the local "alternative" weekly, the *Austin Chronicle*.

The film often riotously skewers the floating-world lifestyle common to many college towns. But this amusement can quickly turn to annoyance. *Slacker* is a one-trick pony where everyone has an anti-systemic rap, yet no one is proposing anything other than hedonistic alternatives. The fact that these monologues are monocultural makes them seem doubly indulgent.

During the '80s, I worked the borders between the subculture of *Slacker* and the subcultures of East Austin, the predominantly black and Latino section where I lived. I wrote about black and Latino music and theater for the *Austin American-Statesman* and the *Chronicle*, did publicity for the Black Arts Alliance and served three years as songwriter for a multiracial dance band. So it was always clear to me that Austin had a thriving multicultural arts scene. Yet the versions of this arts scene that Austin exported to America were invariably lily-white.

I remember watching an MTV *Rock Influences* segment on Texas, hosted by the late Stevie Ray Vaughan. The closest it got to any non-white influences was Vaughan saying that Johnny Winter was "a white boy playing Lightnin' Hopkins." No word of Texas' black musicians like Albert Collins or any of the Tex-Mex giants whose sound found its way into rock via imitators like Joe "King" Carrasco. The Austin music scene got a lot of national attention in the '80s—focused almost exclusively on white blues and garage rock dubbed the "New Sincerity," to the exclusion of thriving funk, world beat and Latino scenes. This same self-referential network can be seen in full effect in *Slacker*.

*Slacker's* first scene has director Linklater arriving by Greyhound, catching a cab and doing a monologue on parallel realities and paths

not taken. To his bored driver, Linklater ponders which reality he won't currently be inhabiting if he has caught another cab or chosen to walk to town.

It's a funny send-up of intellectual talkies like *My Dinner with Andre* some critics have noted. It also caused me to wonder, in retrospect, what it would have taken for *Slacker* to intersect with some of the parallel non-white planets. Because the brief glimpse of black workers and passengers crossing the camera's peripheral vision at the bus station was the last indication we got of Austin's multiethnic reality.

**Black and white world:** I do mean any disrespect to Linklater whose off-center approach is refreshing. But I do think *Slacker's* monocultural monologues betray a weakness of too many representations of Austin culture. This is a city where Interstate 35 forms a literal barrier separating white from non-white Austin. On one side is the state capitol—often a backdrop for *Slacker*. On the other side, a mere stone's throw away, are the shotgun shacks and streetwalkers of Austin's black ghetto. Too often this division seems to have been internalized as a sort of cultural apartheid.

While in Austin in July, my sister and I went down to Sixth Street—Austin's "Clubland"—to see some music business people I knew. The "scene" was as I remembered it, or more so—a little United Nations. I talked to musicians and hangers-on from Nicaragua, Colombia, Jamaica, Trinidad and many other nations. They all inhabited the margins of Austin's "mainstream" economy, surviving various *Slacker*-like scams to keep themselves afloat. Yet in *Slacker*, all of them remain out of frame, out of mind.

Certainly Austin artists like Linklater see themselves as progressive supporters of multicultural arts. Yet they do not seem to be engaged in any sort of multicultural dialogue. Austin's "in-crowd" often look down their noses at environments where such a dialogue is taking place—like Sixth Street—as too "commercial to be hip." The "real" Austin, the alternative Austin as defined by *Slacker's* professional cynics, turns out to be almost entirely white. As KRS-One would say: "Ask yourself, homeboy—Why is that?"

Austin has the resources to create a rich cultural gumbo, a cousin to New Orleans, but with a flavor all its own. This Austin is already cooling, in fact, and is merely waiting for an artist capable of taking it to the nation. In the meantime, the Austin America will see in *Slacker* is that of a Southern backwater that has still not learned to think in living color.

Gregory Stephens writes a column on multicultural issues for Pacific News Service. In 1984-87, he served as songwriter/manager for the Austin band Elouise Burrell & Trickle Down.

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By Patrick Z. McGavin

**H**OLLYWOOD HAS ALWAYS GONE outside itself for new directors, looking across borders to discover the next breakthrough talent. In the new global village, political repression overseas and the collapse of the studio system has given a boost to foreign-born directors who function as Hollywood moviemakers. They graft their own sensibility into the star-driven, narrative demands of American movies.

The best examples of critical social commentary about the U.S. tend to originate from foreign voices, whether it's Bill Forsythe, Fred Schepisi, Bernardo Bertolucci, David Cronenberg, Andrei Konchalovsky or Gillian Armstrong. "I've always found if you're one step removed from a culture, you can look at that culture more clearly," says English director Alan Parker.

Parker is an exception, someone who's clearly perceived as a Hollywood director, because of the subject matter and content of his movies. Unlike someone like Ivan Passer, the talented Czech emigre who can't seem to get his movies made, Parker has gotten the backing for the 10 features he's made since his 1976 debut, *Bugsy Malone*. "I'm a strange hybrid, and it's interesting that people can't quite figure out where I fit in, because there are no automatic holes to classify my output. I'm English, but I'm not overly fond of England," Parker says.

**Burning questions:** His new film is *The Commitments*, a loose, funny riff about the formation, rise and fall of a contemporary Dublin soul group. Parker has turned away from the social problem dramas (*Mississippi Burning*, *Come See the Paradise*), and baroque flourishes (*Angel Heart*) of his recent work, and creates something more modest, specific and interesting—without sacrificing his feverish visuals. Based on a respected, 1987 cult novella by a local school teacher and playwright named Roddy Doyle, the title group literally rises out of the blight and ruin of Dublin's ominous, sinister North side.

"I had to be truthful to the regional story, the characters and the lives they lead and where they come from. I wanted to do a naturalistic film, so it had to have the gritty look. It's cinematically interesting without being too overt. It's a different look of Ireland," he says. Parker walked around the Dublin locations, looking for the right texture and tone, something that would distill what these kids are fighting to break out of. "I filmed what I found."

Parker held an open casting call in Dublin, where he heard 2,000 musicians and singers. It's instructive that of the 12 principal speaking parts, only two had any previous acting experience. Parker even subverts the process in a funny audition montage (like the one in *Fame*), where the group's impresario, Jimmy (Robert Arkins) tries out perspective



A scene from Alan Parker's *Commitments*: rude, sharp filmmaking.

## Hollywood outsiders work their way inside

groups. Parker is adept at this type of visual short hand, setting the audition footage within a sociopolitical context. Here it's the arc of these kids' daily lives, and the narrative's lightning rod is Arkins.

"Obviously I wanted to delineate their personalities, and you don't have a lot of time up on the screen to flesh out the characters," he says. *The Commitments* may represent a deeper, personal connection for the director, a time and experience that recalls his own working class background, growing up in Islington, North London. "It's very similar, you have the same block of flats, the aspirations for escape and to make something with your life, and I really had an affinity for these kids," he says.

Parker probably has a foot in both worlds. He likes the technology and resources of the studio, but denounces the politics he's subjected to. Yet he wants his movies to have a mass audience. He doesn't want to make art movies, and he doesn't think of himself as a stylist, like his contemporaries Peter Greenaway or Derek Jarman. "I've always been concerned with telling a story and the acting, and I wanted to concentrate on the writing, and always considered the visuals an afterthought," he says.

*The Commitments* has some rude, sharp filmmaking, and in the best passages, quiet lyricism. Parker has enough faith in the material to play the music without cutting away, and the band loses itself performing covers such as "Mustang Sally," "Mr. Pitiful," "The Dark End of the Street," "Chain of Fools," "Try a Little Tenderness," and "In the Midnight Hour." After the inflammatory, crash-and-burn aesthetics of Parker's last couple of movies, *The Commitments* is something of a revelation. For once Parker isn't always on the defensive.

"That's the problem of being of the left, they're much harder on their own," he says about the heavy criticism, especially following *Mississippi Burning*. "I'm a pretty argumentative person. A friend of mine says, if you're at a dinner party and you mention me or any of my films, you're automatically guaranteed to provoke an argument. I don't mind that. That's what I want to do with my films, but after awhile, it takes its toll on you," Parker says. With *The Commitments*, for the first time in a while, Alan Parker can relax.

**Stage and screen:** The two worlds that Kenneth Branagh moves comfortably through are the theater and cinema, directing and starring

in Shakespeare, classical adaptations or farces, as the co-founder and artistic director of the Renaissance Theatre Company. American audiences got their first glimpse of the RTC last year with their touring productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *King Lear*, in the wake of Branagh's superior film debut, *Henry V*. Branagh's stage direction is intensely cinematic, especially his *Lear*. The compression of the story becomes the theatrical equivalent of the jump cut.

"Stylistically, I'm not overfamiliar with Shakespeare, and I want an immediacy of a reaction, and that doesn't mean I want to avoid anything that takes time, but things have to be taut for me. That means they're can be pauses within them, but the musical rhythm of a play is very important to me," Branagh says. "I'm of a generation that's watched a lot of television and movies, maybe that affects things, and I want to engage people throughout. What I try to do is remember it's for them, and I put myself in their position, not in the position of someone who's just doing it for myself."

Branagh now tackles new challenges with his first American studio picture, as the star and director of *Dead Again*, a stylish murder mystery that moves between disparate narratives: one part is a contemporary thriller about an L.A. detective (Branagh) trying to learn the identity of a beautiful amnesiac artist (Emma Thompson); the other a black and white evocation of a tortured,

blocked composer (Branagh), who's executed for the murder of his socialite wife (Thompson). If Branagh's theater work is clearly drawn from cinema, his film work has the stylized, furious energy and intimacy of the theater.

"I don't see any qualitative differences between theater and film. I've always watched movies much more than I've gone to the theater, it's kind of an easier thing to do somehow. When I direct in theater, I often spend a lot of time referring to movies as a means of directing. The film when I read it, I was very taken. I always loved mystery novels. Given

## FILM

that it was a complicated plot, I wanted to make the story clear. I felt I had to make some visual distinctions between both theories," he says.

**Black and white in color:** Working from Scott Frank's screenplay, Branagh throws in his own eccentric flourishes (references to the Battle of Agincourt, *Othello*, *Henry V*, the apartment Elliot Gould lives in in Robert Altman's *The Long Goodbye*) and a highly idiosyncratic cast, including Andy Garcia, Derek Jacobi and Hanna Schygulla, and Robin Williams, in a hilarious cameo as a discredited psychiatrist. "The film was going to be naturalistic, so in the recreation of modern day L.A., I wasn't looking for landmarks. We wanted the images to loom, so in that sense it could echo in what some people feel may be the overblown quality to the earlier stuff."

"The black and white is necessary to tell the story clearly, but also to evoke this glamorous, heightened existence that we all kind of remember. We were going for a sense of showmanship, in the way Andy Garcia ages, I get to play two parts, Emma plays two parts. It was a sort of full bloodied attempt to grab the medium," he says. If Olivier was the obvious reference point in Branagh's early theater work, Branagh's two films suggest a connection with Orson Welles ("I read a lot about him to sort of figure out what went wrong, and also the early stuff is more consistently brilliant. I love things like *Chimes of Midnight*, for obvious reasons because you have genius next to the moment when the money ran out," he says).

That's not likely to happen with Branagh, and he reports getting through his first studio assignment with all of his faculties intact, though he's quick to say he was protected by executive producer Sydney Pollack. "I did get through, though not without the odd free and frank exchange of views. As it was Paramount did not get in my way. It's such an odd picture, they weren't quite sure what they had. It was never going to become a generic thriller, it was always going to be a slightly odd, hyphenated thing, so they had to go with me."

**Patrick Z. McGavin** is a critic living in Chicago.



# South Africa

Continued from page 13  
in Latin America.

Yet, despite all the new ideas being floated, concerns persist that neither side has really come to grips with South Africa's intractable realities. "Both don't want to believe that this is a typical Third World country," says Terreblanche.

Most social democrats seem blithely unaware that their policies risk confrontation with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. South Africa's foreign debt stands at \$19 billion, despite six years of crippling repayments. Overseas creditors—including the IMF and World Bank, once sanctions end—must approve the country's economic policies if the loans are to be refinanced. This has forced other big debtors to choose between the World Bank's harsh free-market policies and devastating credit cutoffs. Fortunately, the World Bank teams took a softer line in recent visits here, perhaps heralding a greater margin of maneuver. Still, the impression remains that the ANC lacks "enough appreciation of the significance of the foreign debt question," as one of the party's own economists politely says.

Neo-liberal policies could pose even greater dangers: growing income inequality and tribal splits. COSATU economists call the approach the "50 percent solution," arguing that it dooms half the population to economic marginality. Stephen Gelb, the group's leading light, argues that greater inequality is inherent in a low-wage, export-based growth scheme driven by foreign capital. Gelb warns that similar policies led to the miserable wages and working conditions in the *maquila-dora* belt south of the U.S.-Mexican frontier.

Moreover, given the appeals of the Far East, Eastern Europe and South America, it is uncertain that South Africa could attract enough foreign investment to reduce joblessness. In such circumstances, ethnic patronage politics could increase inter-tribal friction and lead to clashes with unions and civic groups based upon inter-ethnic solidarities. (Such conflicts already help fuel the ongoing violence in many black townships.)

For solidarity movements overseas, the new developments in South Africa also portend change: from economically isolating the country to encouraging social democracy. Merely lifting sanctions, which were largely symbolic, will do little to boost growth or restructure the economy. Laying the groundwork for such a shift, the ANC conference switched from a policy of total sanctions to a phased, conditional removal, whose consequences anti-apartheid Americans must ponder. In addition to political support for the movement, it implies moving gradually from punitive measures to positive ones, such as technical aid, sister-city projects, targeted investments, etc. Rather than cutting ties, it means trying to make aid—such as Rep. Steven Solarz' (D-NY) proposed multi-billion dollar South African Development Fund—available to a new regime with as few free-market strings attached as possible. As South Africa's problems come to resemble those of other Third World countries, so will those facing solidarity activists: uniting American interests helped by progressive development policies and widening the narrow developmental options the right seeks to impose abroad.

Craig Charney is a Social Science Research Council fellow working toward a Yale University Ph.D. in South Africa.

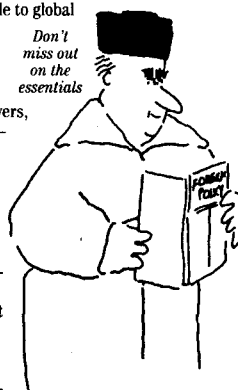


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### NEW YORK

September 19-29

#### THE NEW YORK MARXIST SCHOOL

Thursday, Sept. 19—Radhika Lal, Why Marxism? (first of 3 classes), 6 p.m.; \$40.

Spanish placement tests (for students who need help in choosing the course level corresponding to their ability or experience), 6 p.m.

Annette Rubinstein, Philosophy in Drama (first of 8 classes), 7:30 p.m.; \$80.

Friday, Sept. 20—Pot-luck dinner (bring a dish and a friend), 6:30 p.m.; free.

Saturday, Sept. 21—Introductory Spanish, level II (first of 12 3-hour classes); \$290.

Radical Walking Tour of Greenwich Village (meets in front of Village Cigars, Seventh Ave. South and Christopher St.), 1 p.m.; \$6.

Sunday, Sept. 22—Cartoons and illustrations from *The Guardian* (art opening; on view through Oct. 18), 4 p.m.; free.

Monday, Sept. 23—Introductory Spanish, level I (first of 26 2-hour classes), Section A: 8:30 a.m.; Section B: 8 p.m.; \$390.

Intermediate Spanish (first of 26 2-hour classes), Section A: 11 a.m.; \$390.

Gil Green, The Communist Party, USA in Retrospect (lecture), 7 p.m.; \$6.

Tuesday, Sept. 24—Intermediate Spanish (first of 26 2-hour classes), Section B: 8:30 a.m.; Section C: 6 p.m.; \$390.

Ignacio Perrotini, Marx: La Teoría de Crisis, y el Capitalismo en Latinoamérica (first of 8 classes in Spanish), 8 p.m.; \$80.

Phyllis Bennis, The Marxist Left and Social Movements (lecture), 8 p.m.; \$6.

Wednesday, Sept. 25—Renee Toback, Economics for Daily Life (first of 6 classes), 6 p.m.;

Friday, Sept. 27—Eqbal Ahmad, The International Order: Imperialism in the Aftermath of the Gulf War (lecture), 7 p.m.; \$6.

Sunday, Sept. 29—African Beginnings (poetry/discussion), 2 p.m.; \$5.

Unless specified, all events take place at The New York Marxist School, 79 Leonard St. (5 blocks below Canal St. between Church St. and Broadway), New York, NY 10013. Scholarships are available for low-income people. Call or write for complete Fall 1991 catalog describing all classes, seminars, lectures, and other events. For more information, call (212) 941-0332.

### September 24

The Campaign for Peace and Democracy and Riverside Church are sponsoring a major forum on "The Future of the USSR." Panelists are John Palmer, European correspondent for *The Guardian* (London); Doug Ireland, columnist for *The Village Voice*; and Joanne Landy, director of the Campaign for Peace and Democracy. Admission free, 7 p.m., Riverside Church Assembly Hall, entrance on Claremont between West 120th and 121st Streets. For details, contact: CPD, P.O. Box 1640, Cathedral Station, New York, NY 10025, (212) 666-5924.

### September 25

The Campaign for Peace and Democracy will host John Palmer, European correspondent for *The Guardian* (London) in a talk on "European Union and U.S. Foreign Policy." Admission free, 6:45 p.m., Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, 15 Union Square West, 6th Floor. For details, contact: CPD, P.O. Box 1640, Cathedral Station, New York, NY 10025, (212) 666-5924.

### September 28-29

Special National Workers World Party Conference on "The Crisis in the USSR: the Struggle to Defend Socialism; Building the Class Struggle in the U.S." Saturday Morning Session (10 a.m.) features keynote speech by Sam Marcy, Chairperson, Workers World Party. Information: (212) 255-0352. WWP, 46 West 21st St., New York, NY 10010.

### LOS ANGELES

September 21

Join Progressive Democrats at the Democratic National Committee General Assembly meeting, Saturday, 9 a.m. to noon, at the downtown Los Angeles Biltmore Hotel, 506 South Grand Avenue, between 5th and 6th Streets. Denounce the Democratic Leadership! They have failed to represent us! We will use this meeting to launch a grassroots movement as Democrats to condemn the National Democratic Party for hiding the truth about the crimes of Democrats and the U.S. government, and to provide voters with a truly progressive national platform and slate of representatives with integrity for the White House and Congress. Democratic National Committee

members from all over the country will be gathered at the Biltmore Hotel on September 21 to finalize plans for the National Democratic Convention at Madison Square Garden in July 1992. This will be the last Democratic National Committee meeting "open" to the public before the convention. For more information, contact Charlene Richards (days), (213) 306-0249, or Delia Hitz (nights), (213) 396-4841.

### NICARAGUA

September 21-October 3

HEALTH, WOMEN AND TRADE UNIONS IN NICARAGUA: Join a delegation focused on women's health and health trade unionists in Nicaragua from September 21-October 3, 1991. Visit women's hospitals, clinics and natural childbirth centers. Meet lay and professional midwives, women health workers and trade unionists. Hosted by FET-SALUD, Nicaraguan Health Workers Union. Cost is \$700 plus airfare. Organized by National Central American Health Rights Network (NCAHRN), 853 Broadway, Room 416, New York, NY 10003, (212) 420-9635.

### MILWAUKEE

October 4

Mobilization for Survival sponsors "From 'New World' to 'New World Order': Celebrating 500 Years of Resistance." Food, music, keynotes: Hugo Blanco of Peru, Menominee activist Ingrid Washinawatok, Camille Odeh of Palestinian Women's Associations. Plymouth Church, 2717 E. Hampshire, 6-9 p.m. National Convention, October 5-6, East Troy, WI. Information: (414) 964-5158.

### CHICAGO

October 5

The Chicago Religious Task Force on Central America celebrates 10 years of Solidarity with the People of Central America and looks forward to the challenges ahead. You are cordially invited to dinner, honors and awards and dancing to WXRT disc jockey Terri Hemmert. Saturday, Oct. 5, 6-12 p.m. at the Unitarian Church of Evanston, 1330 Ridge Ave., Evanston. Suggested donation \$15 per person. Table for 10: \$135. Parking available. For tickets or information, contact the Chicago Religious Task Force on Central America, 59 E. Van Buren, #1400, Chicago, IL 60605, (312) 663-4398.

### UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO

AT BOULDER

October 4-6

The Student Environmental Action Coalition (SEAC) will host COMMON GROUND, the third annual national student environmental conference. Thousands of students will gather at Common Ground to prepare for the next generation of environmental campaigns and battles. Common Ground will focus on diversifying the environmental movement, placing a global perspective on our grassroots campaigns and developing student leadership. The conference will feature professional and student leaders from both the environmental and social-justice movements. Confirmed speakers include David Brower (chairperson, Earth Island Institute), Heather Booth (founder, Midwest Academy), and Pat Bryant (director, Gulf Coast Tenants Association). Also invited are Noel Brown (N. American director, U.N. Environmental Programme), Howard Zinn (author, *People's History of the United States*), and Tony Mazzocchi (president, Oil, Chemical & Atomic Workers). The national conference is vital in the attempt to strengthen the student environmental movement, according to Common Ground Co-Chair Jeannette Galanis. "With so many people across the country fighting for the preservation of the Earth, strong networking and widespread coordinating is crucial to the success of our efforts." For registration information, please call (303) 440-5290 or write Common Ground, 862 17th St., Boulder, CO 80302.

### HAITI

December 5-15

HEALTH DELEGATION TO HAITI. Visit health centers, meet health workers and policymakers, learn the history of health and politics in Haiti. NCAHRN/Links, 853 Broadway, Suite 416, NYC 10003. (212) 420-9635.

### LOVELAND, OHIO

January-May, 1992

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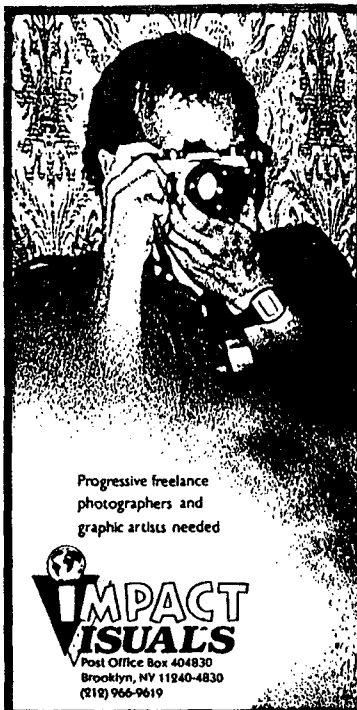
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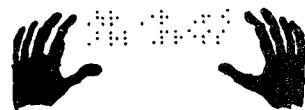
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ARE PRETTY MUCH UNDER CONTROL  
AND AT MY AGE I GUESS  
THAT'S ABOUT ALL I  
CAN HOPE FOR.



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# NATURAL



effectively screen out virtually all visually objectionable material. It's quite literally as quick as the blink of an eye, compatible with all makes of video gear, requires no batteries and will not add to lap clutter.

Further, unless you have muted the screams of the little crack babies *and* closed your eyes, you can tell when the scene ends by monitoring the audio ("And, now, on a happier note, at the tractor pull finals today..."). If you *have* muted the little screams, the video mute works so fast that you can take a quick "sample" to see if what you don't want to see is still there. If it is, simply "re-mute" and continue sampling as needed.

**Deadly images:** The video mute works with crack babies, famine victims, animals in distress, junkies shooting dope, the homeless, environmental crime, terrorism, and even Robert Novak on a rant. Try it.

What's that? Insensitive? Literally closing my eyes to problems?

Just the opposite.

I was born in 1945. I remember the first time I saw a real dead person on television, many years ago. I thought this was quite extraordinary, showing a real dead person on TV. Today, dead persons (real or fictitious) seem to constitute a large percentage of the on-TV population, along with the crack babies, junkies, Novak, etc. I've gotten quite used to dead persons on TV. The experts would say I'm becoming "desensitized." I can now see dead and even mutilated people on TV while eating dinner, and say something like, "Please pass the salt."

Well, I am determined, even if TV programmers are not, that I remain sensitized to dead persons, et al., simply by not allowing their images to become dinnertime ho-hum. Perhaps the experts are right. Perhaps the sheer profusion of such TV imagery numbs us to "real" life. How many hostages do we have to see swinging from ropes before we simply shrug and pass the salt? And how many television stations are going to forego showing hostages swinging from ropes? We *could* lose our capacity for outrage. Maybe we already have. That's outrageous.

In this era of infoglut, you must be your own editor. You need a quick trigger finger for the audio mute, and an even quicker eyelid for an effective video mute. The alternative, indiscriminately gawking at everything that spews forth from the tube, involves not only the cheapening of what should remain powerful images but the slow-but-sure erosion of your capacity to care.

Travis Charbeneau is a writer living in Richmond, Va.

in terms of the images shown. Not only are there more images available than ever before, but each one clamors for attention in an ever more competitive environment. The same remote that empowered us with its mute button and enabled us to change channels at the slightest impulse also challenged TV programmers to show ever more "compelling" images. Accordingly, they have done their best to keep our eyes riveted to the screen, everything from showing us shooting victims being riveted to the wall to such tired-but-sure-fire ploys as the almost-naked lady.

This trend toward ever more attention-grabbing, graphic imagery shows no signs of slackening, making the helpless viewer witness to a thousand unspeakable visions every day and feeding the frenzy for censorship that forever lies just beneath the veneer of any free society. It's the same condition in terms of video pollution we suffered regarding audio pollution prior to the era of zapping.

There is no probability of a technological fix for this any time soon, no video equivalent on the remote control to the mute button. Even if you *could* "mute" video along with audio, how would you know when to "un-mute"? Until we get the technological equivalent of a BS detector, an intelligent gizmo that will automatically blank both video *and* audio to suit individual viewer tastes, resuming full program only when the coast is clear, we're stuck with a nasty problem.

**Picture this:** I was encountering just this problem the other night when the solution hit me right between the eyes, as it were. I was beholding yet more news footage of "crack babies," scrawny, screaming, premature infants, trembling from cocaine withdrawal, punctured with tubes, trussed into monitoring gear, etc. I have seen a lot of crack babies. I understand there is quite a problem with crack babies, and I want something done about it. But I do not want to see any more crack babies. Instinctively, I closed my eyes.

Eureka! Yes, we have no earlids. But, providentially, the Deity did spring for a pair of eyelids for each and every one of us. The anatomical "video mute" is here now! Properly employed, this device can

## The video mute lets you fine-tune your viewing reality.

# M

any years fat, dumb and happy into the television age, man found himself suffering terribly from a crippling anatomical shortcoming: no "earlids." Unless the fingers were jammed into the ears while singing the national anthem, there was no way, short of switching it off, to avoid hearing what the TV was saying.

Then, just in the last 10 years, we saw the advent of the remote control equipped with a "mute" button *and* the VCR with its "fast forward." These devices enable us to "zap" a wide variety of audio pollution, from Snuggles the Bear on a saccharine binge to Robert Novak on a rant. "Zapping" is the very definition of technological empowerment, compensating for the Deity's oversight in the earlid department.

**Upping the ante:** Unfortunately, during this same period, television has changed